Frederick Myrick of Nantucket:
Physical Characteristics of the Scrimshaw

Donald E. Ridley
(The Kendall Whaling Museum)

Janet West
(Scott Polar Research Institute)

WITH ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS BY
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The Kendall Whaling Museum
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2000
Dedicated to
Paul Vardeman
who kept track of the Frederick Myrick inventory for so many years,
and without whom this monograph would not have been possible;

and to the Memory of
Des Liddy
Scrimshaw Historian and Forensics Pioneer.

Frederick Myrick of Nantucket: Physical Characteristics of the Scrimshaw
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COVER ILLUSTRATION: The Barclay on her homeward bound passage. Sperm whale tooth scrimshaw by Frederick Myrick, ship Susan of Nantucket, circa 1829. Kendall Whaling Museum, #S-1185; Cat. 30 B-1. [Photo: Donald E. Ridley.]

FRONTISPICE: The Susan on her homeward bound passage (detail). Sperm whale tooth scrimshaw by Frederick Myrick, ship Susan of Nantucket, circa 1829. Kendall Whaling Museum, #S-691; Cat. 30 S-1. [Photo: Donald E. Ridley.]
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Foreword

For a variety of reasons both historical and technical, Frederick Myrick (1808-1862) has been the most renowned of all scrimshaw practitioners, and has for a half century held the place of primacy among whaler-artists. His prodigious output of over one hundred finely worked bone, tortoise shell, and ivory carvings has been well-documented. His marvelous production of works of art in ivory, bone, tortoise shell, and other materials has been well-documented. His magnificent production of works of art in ivory, bone, tortoise shell, and other materials has been well-documented. His prodigious output of three dozen finely engraved sperm whale teeth has been accomplished in the space of only a few months, from December 1828 to September 1829, during the latter part of a Pacific Ocean whaling voyage in the ship Susan of Nantucket—hence the term "Susan's Teeth." Coinciding in 1955 by Everett Crosby to refer to Myrick's scrimshaw.

Two Susan's Teeth were accessioned by the East India Marine Society (now Peabody Essex Museum) of Salem, Massachusetts, prior to 1830; these were two of the first three pieces of scrimshaw known to have entered any museum collection. The Musée Océanographique in Monaco acquired another circa 1840. Yet despite this distinguished record, little attention was paid to the identity or circumstances of the artist until Everett U. Crosby's "Susan's Teeth and Much about Scrimshaw" appeared in 1955, at which time only a handful of Myrick's works were known. Additional examples have since been identified and painstakingly authenticated, bringing the current count to 36. In the meantime, an ever-increasing body of trade in Susan's Tooth forgeries has arisen. However, until now, no body of substantive critical literature about Myrick's work has been conspicuously absent.

This anthology is intended as a companion volume to Donald E. Riley et al., Frederick Myrick: Scrimshaw Catalogue Raisonné (Kendall Whaling Museum Monograph Series No. 13, 2000). Both publications descend from the Proceedings of the Frederick Myrick Symposium, held at the Kendall Whaling Museum during 26-28 June 1998. In producing these monographs it has been our collective intention comprehensively to inventory, describe, and catalogue all of Myrick's known works, to characterize the current state of forensic documentation, and to highlight in detail specific benchmark characteristics of the artist's iconography, design, and technique.

In undertaking this project we are collectively indebted to Dr. Janet West and the late Desmond Liddy, who independently pioneered the systematic physical examination of scrimshaw and established its defining procedures and protocols; and to Paul Varden, who for many years diligently studied Myrick's methods, tracked the whereabouts of known specimens, and maintained a running inventory that became the basis of the Catalogue Raisonné. We are also greatly indebted to the several institutional and private collectors who generously made their scrimshaw available for exhibition and evaluation and to the staff of the Kendall Whaling Museum, whom we have long saddled with being the peripatetic hosts of these forensic adventures and of the various Scrimshaw Collectors' Weekends.

Finally, we bid a fond farewell to our venerable, curmudgeonly friend Des Liddy, who passed away just as this publication was going to press.

Suzan M. Frank, Ph.D.
The Kendall Whaling Museum

Comprehensive List of the Scrimshaw

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(2) Drawn by Crosby 1955.
(3) Incorrectly dated by Crosby 1955.
(4) Held in the UK and examined there by Janet West.
(5) Discovered and authenticated since June 1998.
(6) Current whereabouts unknown.
Nantucket House Flags. Page spread of watercolor drawings in the shipboard journal of Captain William J. Coleman III aboard the whaleship *Catawba* of Nantucket in 1844, illustrating the private signals of various Nantucket whaling merchants. The flag labeled "Susan" (far-right column, fourth down) belongs to Aaron Mitchell, managing agent of the *Susan* and several other Nantucket whalers. It matches the house flag depicted in monochrome on two of Frederick Myrick's portraits of the *Susan* (Cat. 29-01-13 and 29-02-08), shown here with a white diamond centered between red at the hoist and blue at the fly. On the same page (lower left) is a flag of essentially the same design but with the colors reversed, labeled "Rambler" and "Mary Mitchell," two more Nantucket whalers that were also managed by Aaron Mitchell. [The Kendall Whaling Museum, Log #46, Photo: Mark Sexton.]
Sifting the Characteristics of Frederick Myrick's Scrimshaw
by Donald E. Ridley, P.E. (The Kendall Whaling Museum)

1. Introduction

A cursory examination of Myrick's scrimshaw on sperm whale teeth could lead one to believe that the same images were repeated on each of the thirty-six pieces now attributed to him. Indeed, this is implied by Crosby in Susan's Teeth and Much About Scrimshaw. Examination of twenty-five authenticated pieces exhibited during the 1998 Scrimshaw Collector's Weekend proved quite otherwise. The twenty-five included seven of Myrick's eight undated teeth, and eighteen specimens spanning the entire range of his dated scrimshaw. There are twenty-eight dated pieces in all, spanning the period December 18, 1828, through September 4, 1829. Twenty-six of these pieces depict the ship Susan of Nantucket, the other two the bark Ann of London. Of the eight undated pieces, one is of the ship Barclay of Nantucket, two are of the ship Frances of New Bedford, and the remainder depict the Susan.

In this essay we will identify certain characteristics that exemplify Myrick's work, variations in the images depicted, and the evolution of his technique. This is facilitated by the dates given on most of the pieces, without attempting to impute any significance to the dates, other than placing these pieces in chronological sequence.

The shorthand identification of the teeth employed herein is based on the date. Dated pieces are identified by the year, followed by the month and the day; for example, 28-12-18 stands for December 18, 1828. Undated pieces are assigned the number 30, followed by a letter designating the vessel depicted (B = Barclay, F = Frances, and S = Susan), and an arbitrarily assigned sequence number. Thus, 30-S3 is the "third" of five undated Myrick teeth depicting the Susan.

2. Principal Characteristics

Myrick's work is exclusively blade incised. All pieces are monochrome, "inked" with an exceptionally black pigment suspended in a very small amount of oil.

Starboard-side portraits of the ships showing accurate detail of rigging and sails are a consistent feature of his work. These were frequently a whaling scene on one face, and a homeward bound depiction on the opposite face, the latter incorporating a lighthouse and light keeper's home on all but 29-03-18 and 29-03-24. An example of this can be seen in Figure 3, top. In their respective essays in this publication, Janet West discusses the variety of scenes shown, as well as the details of the sails and rigging; and Judy Lund theorizes on the conformity of the masts and yards.

The tip area of the tooth is always divided from the body by a circumferential line or lines. A single line or the upper of two lines serves as the terminus of the tip incrustation. In some cases the signature and date appear between two dividing lines; on some where a single line was used, the signature and date appear above the line; and in a few cases the signature and date appear in a different location altogether.

Crossed American flags, each over a rainbow, appear on the tip of all Susan, Barclay, and Frances pieces, while the two Ann teeth have crossed Union Jacks, each over a single line arch. The only exception to this is 28-12-18, which displays both the American flag and the Union Jack (Figure 1). All flag staffs are narrow without halyards, except 30-B1, where they are broad with halyards.

All of the pieces depicting American ships display a spread eagle with an olive branch in one talon and arrows in the other, surrounded by an arch. The eagle holds a ribbon in its beak which contains the motto "E PLURIBUS UNUM" in upper case letters. The letters, which do not fill the width of the ribbon, rest on its lower edge, which is used for the bottom portion of the B, E, L, and U's. The use of the bottom line of the ribbon as a guide line is characteristic of all Myrick scrimshaw. Some variations in this motif are discussed in the next section.

The fouled anchor, at the tip of most of the pieces, makes its first appearance on 28-12-28, is absent on 29-01-02, reappears on 29-01-07, and remains for the balance of the dated pieces and on all of the undated pieces except 29-03-18, where it is upright (as it is on all pieces subsequent to 29-03-27). The anchor stock is inverted through 29-03-27. Figure 3 illustrates one version of the inverted stock as well as the upright stock with reinforcing bands which are on all anchors from 29-06-20 on. Other variations in the representation of the anchors are also discussed in the next section.

3. Variations

The eagle and motto motif, discussed above, has several variations. The surrounding arch, in all but two cases, is a twisted vine. On 28-12-18 the arch is double lined without vines and contains the motto, while an unwound single vine arch appears on 30-S1, and the twined vine arch on 29-02-08 has two flowers center top. The motto in the arch of 28-12-18 fill the width of the arch.

There are several variations of the fouled anchor motif. An unshaded anchor appears on 28-12-18, the three sequential pieces 29-02-16 through 29-03-04, and 29-03-27. 29-02-16 has reinforcing bands on the stock. A shaded anchor was used on eleven sequential pieces from 29-01-07 through 29-02-12 [Figure 3, left]. Only 29-03-24 has a partially shaded stock. The unshaded anchor with upright stock appears only on 29-03-18 and 30-B1.

There are two versions of the couplet that is present on most of the pieces:

- Death to the living long life to the killers
- Success to sailors wives & greasy luck to whalers
first appears on 28-12-28, continues through 29-02-09, reappears on 29-03-24 through 29-08-28, 30-S2 through 30-SF, 30-1F and 30-F2. A slightly different version, substituting "long live the killers" for "long life to the killers," appears on 29-03-04, 29-03-27, 29-08-24, 30-01, 30-S5 and 30-B1. The complete is not present on 29-02-23 and 29-03-04.

Two additional variants are exhibited on 30-B1: broad flag staffs with halyards, and cross-hatched shading of the hull. All others have narrow staffs without halyards, and longitudinal shading of the hull.

The house flag of Nantucket merchant Aaron Mitchell, managing agent of the Susan, appears on only two Susan's Teeth: 29-01-13 and 29-02-08 (the latter is shown in Figure 4, center). A drawing of this flag, together with those of other Nantucket whaling merchants, appears in the shipboard journal of Captain William J. Coleman III aboard the whaleship Cutawaba of Nantucket in 1844 (Kendall Whaling Museum, Log #46). The flags there are rendered in color, showing the Susan flag with red triangles at the luff and blue triangles at the leech.

![Red and Blue House Flag](image)

House flag of Aaron Mitchell, whaling merchant of Nantucket, as it appears on two Susan's Teeth. Captain William J. Coleman's drawing of the same flag in his journal aboard the ship Cutawaba of Nantucket in 1844 is labeled "Susan," and shows a white diamond centered between red at the hoist and blue at the fly. On the same page is a flag of essentially the same design, but with the colors reversed, labeled "Rambler" and "Mary Mitchell," both of which were Nantucket ships also managed by Aaron Mitchell.

4. **Style**

A progression in style from the earliest to the latest of the dated pieces is clearly apparent. In general this is evident in a more secure hand which evolves into a deep, "slashing" style in the later dated pieces and all but 30-B1 of the undated work. The undated Susan teeth, and especially the two Frances pieces, seem to have been executed near the end of the dated pieces, or perhaps afterwards. The characteristics of 30-B1 place it as late March or perhaps early April 1829. Two examples of this progression are exhibited here.

A significant amount of text appears on all of the pieces, and from this we discern a continuous progression in the style of the letters as well as the style of engraving. The earliest pieces exhibit very elaborate letter forms. The upper case letters conform to the title portion of the "SPECIMEN OF PEN-MANSHP" executed by Myrick in 1821 (Nantucket Historical Association). The letters became simpler in shape as time progressed, and finally assume the deep, "slashing" style referred to earlier. Consider the "a's" in Figure 4, and note the following:

1. 28-12-18 is double lined, erect, and has a rounded shape with the body of the letter closed at the base.
2. 29-01-13 is single lined, erect, and retains the rounded shape with the base of the body closed.
3. 30-08-20 is single lined, sloping, and not rounded, and the guide line forms the base of the body of the letter.
4. 30-F2 has single, very deep lines, is sloping, not rounded, and the guide line forms the base of the body of the letter.

A similar progression exists in the "g's" in Figure 4 with respect to line quality, rounding, and closure of the body of the letter, but with the following additional characteristics:

1. 28-12-18: top closure is elaborate and tail is full backward sloping S shape.
2. 29-01-13: top closure is a single line projection and tail remains full backward sloping S.
3. 30-08-20: top closure is a single line projection and tail is crescent, the letter is erect.
4. 30-F2: similar to 29-08-20, but now with very deep lines.

There is a decided change in style between 29-03-27 and 29-08-20. The style exhibited in 29-08-20 becomes progressively closer to that of 30-F2 as we move through the balance of the dated pieces, six in number, ending with 29-09-04. All of the undated Susan pieces and the other Frances teeth are similar in style to 30-F2. The only cursive legends appear on 28-12-22 ("The Maria Islands") and 29-02-02 ("Ship Susan of Nantucket — Frederick Swain Master").

Myrick's treatment of the sea is the second example of development of style. It is represented by many wavy lines from 28-12-18 through 29-01-07. Five V-shaped lines are used on 29-01-13, and four V-shaped lines on all subsequent pieces except 30-F2, which has three. Three examples of this progression are shown in Figure 5.

5. **Summary**

Based on the examinations conducted, and some of the details of those reported in the preceding, certain benchmarks in Myrick's work can be established. These are:

1. Blade incised engraving, and the use of a very black pigment suspended in only a small amount of oil.
2. The conformity of the hull, masts, and yards (as reported by Judith Lund).
3. The conformity of the sails and rigging (as reported by Janet West).
4. Representation of the sea as wavy lines through 29-01-02, and subsequently as regular V-shaped lines.

5. The progression of letter shapes and depth of engraving.

6. A rainbow under the American flag, and a single line arch under the Union Jack.

7. Anchors, when present, have an inverted stock through 29-03-27 (except 29-03-18) and an upright stock thereafter. In addition, all anchor stocks from 29-08-20 have reinforcing bands.

8. The motto in the ribbon is in upper case letters which are shorter than the width of the ribbon, and use the lower edge of the ribbon to form the lower elements of B, E, L, and U.

There are also some anomalies in the iconography of these pieces:

1. On 28-12-18, the placement of the motto in the arch, rather than a ribbon.

2. Three anomalies respecting the anchors: the out-of-sequence unshaded anchor with stock inverted on 28-12-18; the unshaded anchor with inverted stock and reinforcing bands on 29-02-16, and the unshaded anchor with upright stock, but without reinforcing bands, on 30-B1.

3. Broad flag staffs with halyard on 30-B1. All others have narrow staffs without halyard.

4. Cross-hatched shading of the hull on 30-B1. All others have longitudinal shading lines.

5. The twined vine arch on 29-02-08 has two flowers center top, and there is an untwined vine arch on 30-S1.

6. The use of five lines to represent the sea on 29-01-13. All subsequent pieces, including the undated teeth, have four lines, except 30-F2, which has three lines.

7. The tails of the “g’s” on 29-01-02 and 30-B1 have loops. None of the other pieces exhibit this characteristic.

8. The only cursive legends appear on 28-12-22 (“The Maria Islands”), and 29-02-06 (“Ship Susan of Nantucket — Frederick Swan Master”). The letter shapes conform well with the “SPECIMEN OF PENMANSHIP” mentioned earlier, especially the upper case letters.


These benchmarks and anomalies facilitate the authentication of Myrick’s work, and the identification of fraudulent pieces which, unfortunately, exist in significant numbers.

The Scrimshaw Motifs of Frederick Myrick, with Forensic Observations

by Janet West, M.A., Ph.D. (Scott Polar Research Institute)

1. Introduction

This analysis is based on an examination of 34 examples of “Myrick” scrimshaw in museums and private collections, most of which are thought to present to be genuinely the work of Myrick. Of them, 26 were exhibited at the Kendall Whaling Museum during 26-28 June 1998. Many of these had arrived some time previously, providing the opportunity to examine them all in detail under magnification. In some cases this was for the second time, as 10 teeth (including 29-02-07-2, which was not on display), were examined during a preliminary study in the USA in 1990. In addition, three pieces were examined in England: 29-01-07 (Ann of London, Ann2), which is in very poor condition; 29-01-27; and 29-02-16, which is at the American Museum of Britain (Claveron Manor), near Bath, making a total of 29 pieces examined. Unfortunately, two pieces listed by Paul Varden in 1991 (personal communication) could not be traced: 28-02-16 and 28-12-10; a third (29-09-11) is classified incorrectly by Crosby (1955: 20). These three are not discussed here, but of others — 28-12-28 (the original “Crosby” tooth), 28-12-26 (Ann of London, Ann1), 29-02-12 (Monaco), and 30-S4 — only photographs were available but the main features were recorded. A Susan tooth dated 28-12-18 and recently located by Donal Ridley is mentioned but it is anomalous in many respects and could not be properly evaluated at the time.

For this analysis it was essential to have material comparable with the “type specimens” of some biological studies, i.e., material that is indisputably Myrick’s work. The Peabody Essex Museum has two examples: 29-01-02 (PMS1) and 29-01-22 (PMS2), both accessioned circa 1830 (Finimore 1998) and therefore acceptable as type specimens. I was fortunate, as 29-01-02 was one of the few examples of Myrick’s earliest scrimshaw available for study at that time, and without it some of the other early pieces might have been suspect. A third tooth in the Peabody collection, dated 29-09-04 (PMS3), was examined in 1990. Similarly, 29-02-12, accessioned by the Museo Oceanografico (Monaco) in 1840, can also be accepted as genuine. Unfortunately, only photographs were available, but they showed other unusual features that can now be accepted.

Myrick’s scrimshaw is very unusual in having the name of a ship and her home port as a characteristic feature. He usually signed and dated his work and the ship’s masts, providing essential historical information. Most of his scrimshaw shows the Susan of Nantucket, but the Ann of London, the Barclay of Nantucket, and the Frances of New Bedford are also featured. As Myrick’s engraving of sails and rigging is unusually detailed, he provides an interesting visual record of working whaleships in the late 1820s, especially
useful as this was a period of transition in sails and rigging and no plans or other illustrations of these particular vessels are known.

Myrick made one voyage in the Susan, from 21 August 1826 to 27 October 1829 (Frank 1991: 96). The Susan was whaling in the Pacific, where she could have encountered the other three vessels, Strait 1874: 259ff., 263; Jones 1886: 50, 83-89; Rhys Richards 1997, personal communication). At present it is thought that Myrick decorated about 35 sperm whale teeth, most dated from December 1828 to September 1829, a relatively short period in the later part of the voyage. However, there is an inexplicable gap from 27 March 1829 to 20 August 1829 (discussed by Laddie 1990) and also periods when he appeared, from the dates, to have completed two or three pieces in a week and even two on one day (7 February 1829). How he was apparently able to do so much scrimshaw remains a mystery, unless for some extraordinary reason he was exempt from whaling duties, or the dates bear little relation to when the work was done. There are also undated teeth: five showing the Susan, two with the Frances, and one with the Barkley.

Myrick usually chose to engrave sperm whale teeth that were relatively large. There is a range of shapes and sizes but a few could be from the same whale. On both faces and both edges are whaling scenes, whaling scenes, inscriptions, and stylised images. In all examples except the anomalous 28.12.18, Myrick teeth are rotated about their long axes to view the main themes. His whaling scenes have sails and rigging that are very consistent for the situations illustrated but there is a lot of variation in the detail of the motifs and, to some extent, their position. With the exception of 28.12.28, the earliest teeth were found to be the most variable, some having additional small motifs and appearing rather different from the later and undated pieces. However, there is a common format and the combination is characteristic and in most cases easily recognisable.

The most important image on the two faces of each tooth is a broadside view of the vessel. The ship is in a vignette illustrating one of five themes. The title is usually in a decorative scroll above and includes the name of the ship and her home port. Three of the themes were common aspects of whaling. The most frequent shows whaling on the coast of Japan or Peru, hove-to and in the process of cutting in a whale. Another shows the vessel boiling and killing sperm whales, hove-to with the tryworks operating and the hunt in progress. The third shows the vessel under plain sail, cruising for whales. The other two themes, homeward bound (under full sail) and at anchor, could obviously pertain to ships of all kinds (West 1998). These are listed in Table 1 [right]. The sails set and the rigging used in each theme are described later.

Other characteristic inscriptions are the name of the ship and her master, often together, the inscription to Myrick with a date, often together, a two-line verse, and the motto "E PLURIBUS UNUM," usually in two separate scrolls held in the beak of an American eagle device.

There are normally two borders, one around the trimmed root end and a second which encircles the tip and divides it from the bulk of the tooth. The signature and date, if present, are most often found along or between the lines of the tip divider.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Ship</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Obv Rev</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Studies</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<td>H</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

** | | ** | | ** | | ** | | ** |

Themes:
A At anchor | CJ Coast of Japan (Susan or Ann)
BK Boiling and killing sperm whales | CP Coast of Peru (Barkley or Frances)
H Homeward bound | CR Cruising for whales

Notes:
* Exhibited at the Kendall Whaling Museum in June 1998, loan and manuscript used.
** Sustained for "crusing" but title is "trying out"
† These examples can be treated as type specimens: 29.01.02 and 29.01.22. Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, acquired prior to 1831; and 29.02.12. Musee Oceanographique, Monaco, acquired 1846.
‡ "Rigging in the CJ but title is "The Susan of Nantucket meeting with success"
§ Examined in England, loan and manuscript used.
* Examined for a prolonged period, thanks to the owner.
† Examined at the KWM in 1990, loan used. Location now unknown.
‡ Only photograph available. Accessioned in Monaco in 1990.
† Only photograph available. Accessioned in Monaco in 1990.
² Only book plate catalogue illustrations available.

No. of themes = 64: CJ/CP-28 (and **), H=19, BK=11, CR=4 (and **), Ass=2.
At the tip of the tooth and abutting the divider is usually a fouled anchor and pair of flags, American or British as appropriate. Each tooth with portraits of American ships has a version of the American eagle below the tip divider. The other small motifs found on some of the earliest pieces include paired hearts, a globe below the eagle, and other vessels on the horizon, especially near the lighthouse when the ship is homeward bound.

Contrary to expectation, marks from scraper and rasp abound. As shown by the asymmetrical undercutting of the ivory, Myrick did his engraving with a very fine blade, the most common tool for decorative scrimshaw (West & Credland, 1995: 17). The cuts are generally the type expected from a right-handed person, with the blade moving downwards from right to left, but there are intriguing exceptions referred to below. A remarkable amount of fine detail is visible with suitable lighting and a good hand lens or binocular microscope, even when pigment has been lost and the piece is in poor condition. Myrick appears to have used black pigment only, but from the texture and its response to aging the medium appears to be of more than one type.

On the pieces with later dates and the undated pieces, only two of the five themes survive; the ship whaling off the coast of Japan or Peru, and the ship homeward bound. There is also less variety in other motifs. The engraving technique also changes, with the appearance of double knife cuts in August 1829 (West 1998).

Techniques and motifs are described in more detail below. The specimens referred to are comprehensively illustrated in the Catalogue Raisonné edited by Donald Ridley (Kendall Whaling Museum Monograph 13) unless specific reference is made to a Figure in the text.

2. Engraving Techniques

Examination of the earlier teeth, for example 29.01.27, shows that Myrick decorated them mainly with single, right-handed blade cuts which made very narrow slits for lines [Fig. 6] or triangular pockets, as for eagle feathers [Fig. 7]. The cuts lie at an acute angle to the surface and still contain pigment to a greater or lesser extent. Sometimes the flange of ivory, produced by the blade cutting beneath it, has broken away, producing a shallow V with a rougher surface on the left (where the flange has broken) than on the right, which was the original cut surface. Where the tiny pockets made with the tip of a blade are broken out they form triangular depressions. These, as well as scraper and rasp marks, which are very common on Myrick's work, are visible [Fig. 7]. Both were photographed using oblique light to emphasise the surface features. Broken-out surfaces can appear darker than the rest as they are rougher and hold pigment better than those smoothly cut. Some scrimshanders appear deliberately to have created broken-out areas as part of their decorative technique. However, they often arise inadvertently, when the cuts are deep and the surface brittle or when the supporting material becomes thin. This can easily occur when one set of engraved lines approaches or crosses another, as between the shrouds and ratlines. This seems to be the case with most of Myrick's engraving, as broken-out areas are not often extensive.

Examination of the later and undated teeth reveal some changes in his technique. The most significant is the emergence, in August 1829, of a large proportion of lines made using two blade cuts in parallel to cut a groove in the ivory. This required great precision and control. It resulted in a more open slit with both of its outer edges relatively smooth. In some cases it is possible to see evidence of the two separate cuts where they have "over shot" at the end of a line, e.g. 30-S1 [Fig. 8]. Occasionally fragments of ivory remain within the V cut. Myrick developed great skill with this difficult technique, was even able to widen the cuts to fashion a blade at the end of a tiny ear and widen parts of letters. Double blade cuts became the norm for the lettering, the yachts, parts of the mast, and also for the heavier cordage such as stays.

A deep, wide groove can accept more pigment than a narrow or shallow one, so some of the later and undated teeth have more contrast than the early ones. However, open grooves lose pigment more readily than narrow ones, so contrast would be lost more easily with wear. The images on scrimshaw with narrow, single, undercut lines containing pigment will be the most durable, assuming that the colour is unaffected by light. It is common to see old scrimshaw with pigment now confined to the narrowest, inner extremity of a blade cut, especially if the pigment mixture was sufficiently liquid and of the right surface tension to be taken there by capillarity initially.

Myrick used only black pigment, commonly believed to be lampblack, or soot mixed with oil, or scraps of paint. Domestic or artists' oil paint is blended with a "drying" oil such as linseed (flax) so it will oxidise and harden. One of the reasons why the oil from the sperm and other toothed whales, especially porpoises, are excellent lubricants is their resistance to oxidation. They do not readily dry out or harden. It is possible that the scrimshaw pigments that are most resistant to shrinking and cracking are those with the non-drying oil. Although sperm oil was the commonest oil around, we do not yet know how commonly it was used for scrimshaw. Indeed, we have no scrimshaw pigment analyses, as methods are not yet sufficiently sensitive. Scrimshanders may have thought traditional paint superior. So the use of sperm oil may be one of the reasons why Myrick's scrimshaw has pigment which shows surprisingly little shrinkage and cracking. However, it would not explain why there is so little dirt and debris in the scratches on Myrick teeth in comparison with some scrimshaw pieces, as pointed out by Liddell (1998).

From the appearance of the tooth surfaces and the quality of the pigment in general, a number of pieces, especially amongst those that bear later dates or are undated, do appear to have been re-pigmented. This complicates though does not preclude their assessment.

A curious feature of Myrick's engraving which can be seen throughout the range of scrimshaw is that whilst the cuts generally travel from the top right to bottom left of the motifs, a number apparently move from the bottom left to the top right. This is easily seen in the eagle in Figure 7, where the neck and head feathers are cut in opposite directions from those of the leg on the left. This could have been achieved most easily if the tooth were turned 180° to complete the details. However, on some of the later pieces, e.g. 30-S1 [Fig. 9], even adjacent lines appear to be cut in opposite directions.
Even more puzzling is that some lines on these examples appear to be mirror images of one another, as if one cut were made with the right hand as usual and the other with the left. More research is needed, but if it proves to be the case, could Myrick have become ambidextrous during his apparent scrimshaw-free period between March and August 1829?

3. Borders

A. Root Borders

Encircling most Myrick teeth and following the line of the trimmed root end is a border that is interrupted on each face by the lines of the sea. The strangle tooth 28.12.18 has no root border, but on the reverse is part of a dedication: “Engraved for ... Esquire” with the name unfortunately broken away. The silver capping (a later addition) hides any border on 29.02.23.

The most common root border is a sinuous vine with needle-like leaves in opposite pairs, but some of the earliest teeth, e.g. 29.01.02 (PMS1), 29.01.07 (Ann1), and 29.01.13, have a vine with short triangular leaves. Leaves usually point upwards. There is a border of semicircles on the early teeth 28.12.22 and 28.12.26 (Ann1). Unique are 29.08.20 (NH1) with a branching spray similar to the niver branch of the eagle and 29.02.16, with a small schooner parallel to the border.

B. Tip Dividers

On the earlier dated pieces this usually consists of two parallel concentric lines between which is usually Myrick’s signature and a date. Occasionally, there are two or three lines with hatch marks or chevrons between, e.g. 29.01.07 (Ann1), 29.01.20 (SMV), and 29.01.22 (PMS1); or tiny angular trees on 28.12.22. There may be only one single line, especially on the later and the undated teeth. The signature and date, if present, are above or below it. Occasionally, the line is accompanied by dashes (28.12.26 Ann1) or stars (crosses), e.g. 29.03.24. There appear to be several lines on 28.12.28 but it was not available for examination.

Adjoining the divider from above is the flag motif, the anchor or small ship, and occasionally others, e.g. the crossed arrows on 29.02.16. Adjoining it from below is the eagle motif if present. Other motifs such as the brig and cutter of 29.02.16 are rare.

4. Inscriptions and Scrolls

Seven types of inscription are characteristic of Myrick scrimshaw: two of which are within ribbon-like decorative scrolls (ribbands). There are variations in both the position of some of them and the style of lettering, the latter being discussed in more detail by Donald Ridley. Other information, such as a dedication, is unusual.

A. Titles of the Nautical Themes

The titles vary considerably in detail, but from a comparison of the sails and rigging only five main themes are illustrated. There is one on each face of a tooth, with the titles usually in simple scrolls above naming the ship, port of registry, and sometimes a locality. The main exceptions are 28.12.18, 29.02.12, and 29.02.16, which have recognizable themes but lack the conventional titles. The only titles to give a precise locality for the theme is on 29.02.07-2: “The Susan lying at anchor at Mowee.” The results are summarised below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. The Frequency of Occurrence of the General Titles*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. The vessel whaling on the coast of Japan or Peru: 27 examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. The vessel homeward bound:</td>
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<tr>
<td>III. The vessel boiling and killing whales:</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV. The vessel cruising for whales:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. The vessel at anchor:</td>
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* Excludes 29.02.08, 29.03.27, and 29.03.27, discovered since June 1998.
† Although the theme is recognizable, 28.12.18 has no title and 29.02.12 has no locality, so both are excluded.
‡ Although 29.02.16 is entitled “The ship Susan trying out a sperm whale,” she is rigged for cruising, so is excluded from both groups.

If a scroll is present, the lettering usually lies along its lower edge, though the reverse side of 29.08.24 has an extra line below this. The two scrolls on each tooth are usually similar, with their ends of two main types. Some turn upwards and back, then taper to a shorter or longer tail, or into a line. On 29.09.01 the ends become two undulating lines. Tapered ends are the most common on the later teeth. On the earliest examples the ends generally fork and turn up, back and down with a piece projecting below the scroll, though some tails, e.g. 29.01.13 (obverse) are too short for this. There is a double S-shaped scroll on 29.02.07-2 (obv.) and two of them on 29.02.12 (Monaco). Occasionally the ends of the two scrolls are different, e.g. on 29.02.23 (DAF1) and 30-82 (DAF2).

B and C. Names of the Ships and Masters

These are most commonly engraved together along one edge of the tooth: ship Susuz, Frederick Swan Master; ship Barclay, James Barney Master, or ship Am, Samuel Barney Master. The master is not named on either of the Frances teeth. On 29.01.02 (PMS1) the inscription is in a cartouche of two double S-shaped scrolls, and on 29.02.06 (NH1) the lettering is different, in partly cursive script. The fine line used as a guide is worn away in places.
D and E. Myrick’s Name and the Date

Myrick’s name, the forename often abbreviated to Fred., or more rarely Fredk., is engraved on most of his scrimshaw and, incidentally, on a number of fake pieces, some very convincing. It is often combined with the date and usually found along the tip divider, particularly on pieces dated between 29.01.27 and 29.03.04. Unique is 29.08.20 with name and date between the flags at the tip. The name appears with the dedication on 28.12.28 and 29.01.07. The undated teeth, Myrick’s name appears only on 30-F1. Dated teeth without the name include 28.12.22, 28.12.26 (Anni), 29.01.13, 29.03.24, and 29.08.24 (NB1).

F. The Verse (Couplet)

Most teeth have a short verse with two minor variations:

Death to the living, long live [life to] [the] killers,
Success to sailor’s wives & greedy luck to whalers.

This verse is well known, but Myrick was possibly the first to have used this form of it and the first to have applied it to scrimshaw. The verse is engraved on a guide line along one edge of the tooth. Teeth with no verse include 28.12.22, 28.12.26 (Anni), 28.02.23 (Dafi), and 29.09.04 (PMS3).

G. The Motto

The motto "E. PLURIBUS UNUM" engraved in capital letters is usually on two short parallel ribbon scrolls held in the beak of an American eagle. An exception is 28.12.22, where the scrolls are opposite to each other. The ends of the scrolls are usually similar to those of the theme titles, as above. Exceptions include 29.02.07-1 and 29.02.23 (Dafi). The motto on the oddity 28.12.18 is within a double line border that surrounds the eagle.

II. Other Information

The earlier Myrick teeth have some rare inscriptions. In italic script on 28.12.28 there is an extra locality, “The Maria Islands,” which accompanies a crude profile of islands. These are probably the Islas Tres Marias off the Mexican coast, south of Baja California (Donald Ridley, personal communication), and are the only precise locality indicated, apart from the title scroll of 29.02.07-2.

There are also dedications or presentations of the scrimshaw to a new owner. On 28.12.25 in a typical crude lettering below the verse, the dedication is combined with the signature and date: “This was done by Frederick Myrick/for Mr Prince Coffin Decem 28th 1828.” The Anni (29.01.07) is inscribed: “This was done by Fredk. Myrick on board the ship Susan of Nantucket for Mr James Brown on board the Anni of London.” The dedication around the root of 28.12.18 is described earlier.

5. Nautical Themes and the Rig and Rigging

The major motif on each face of a Myrick tooth is a starboard broadside view of a whaleship. Most show the Susan of Nantucket, but there is one tooth with the Baltimore Nantucketers and two examples each of the Frances of New Bedford and the Ann of London.

The hull of the Susan has a good sheer and two light bands along its length. Part of the forward bulwarks has three light, coloured sections, perhaps indicating a loading port (Paul Varden, personal communication). There is a similar though even longer area on 30-B1. The Susan has a deep carriage or beak, more pronounced in the earlier pieces, possibly with a figurehead. The shape of the Ann is similar. The Frances and Baltimore have extremely bluff bows. The Frances has a sloping stern, but the others are convex in profile with a pronounced overhang.

The three American vessels are ship-rigged, crossing three royal yards and setting three headsails: a fore topmast staysail, jib and flying (outer) jib. The Ann, although registered as a ship (Lloyd’s Register of Shipping, London, 1824–30), is shown bark-rigged, carrying a gaff topmast and a mizen topmast staysail (Fig. 11). Apart from headsails, staysails are unusual on scrimshaw. The Susan and the Ann are rigged with spencers (gaff try-sails) on the fore and main masts, though in most views they are shown baulked up. Spencers were a form of staysail used mainly in the early nineteenth century, introduced instead of the trapezoid main topmast and mizen staysails (of which Ann retains one), later to be replaced by the triangular form (Steele 1794: 169; Nares 1862: 6; Smyth 1867: 642; Harland 1884: 840). Both the Ann and the Susan have a double dolphin-striker.

An unusual feature on all four vessels is a spar partly resembling both a spritsail yard (Harland 1884: 21, 23) and whisker boom (Underhill 1946: 11) but slung over the bowsprit and far aft near the stern. Here it acts as a spreader to support the jibboom and outer jibboom guys. This was a transitional arrangement likely occasionally illustrated (e.g.: Brewington 1981: 237). Also unusual is the running rigging of the mainmast of the three American ships. In most views, the main topmast braces lead down from the yard and through lizards (short ropes with a ring at the outer end) from the mizen lower mast. In addition, when the Susan and the Frances are whaling, the main sail (course) appears to be shown as a brig, braced to and from the foremast (Mark Myers and John Harland, personal communications).

On each face of a tooth, the vessel is shown in one of five situations or themes, with appropriate sails and rigging (shown in Table 1). Apart from 28.12.18, the title of each is inscribed in a decorative scroll above. Although there are many minor variations in the titles, the rig illustrated in each theme is remarkably consistent. The five themes are described below.

A few teeth dated before August 1829 have rudimentary figures on the ships, but they are more common on the later and undated pieces, on lookout aloft or on deck, but never actively labouring.

There are differences among the many versions of the Susan: in her proportions, the angles of the masts etc, and some of the topsails in particular
Theme I. On the Coast of Japan or the Coast of Peru (28 examples)

Whatever the vessel, a whaling scene with a title that includes “on the coast of Japan” (Susan or Ann) or the “on the coast of Peru” (Barclay or Frances), both well known grounds, is the most common. Also included is 29.02.12 (Monaco) which has the identical rig but the title “The ship Susan of Nantucket whaling with success.” The untitled oddity 28.12.22 is excluded for a major difference in spite of many similarities in the rig.

The vessel is hove-to, fore-topmast to the mast (shackled or backed) with boats lowered amongst whales, usually sperm whales but there are right whales on 29.01.02 (PMS1). A carcass is generally secured alongside, with the flake-chain often visible. As was customary, there are two cutting-in tackles, here set up on pendants from the main mast head, each with a guy leading to the forecastle area. In most views the process of cutting-in or flensing has begun, with a strip of blubber (blanket piece) suspended by a toggle.

Allowing for the bark-rig of the Ann (both 28.12.26 and 29.01.07), the ships are almost identically balanced. The Ann has her driver/spanker, main spencer and mizen topmast staysail set, in place of the mizen topmast of the other vessels. All have their main topsails set but their sail is much reduced. The topgallant yards are lowered and the royals have been sent down. The fore course is hauled up and the fore topsail rected and backed, to slow her way. Of the headsails, only the fore topmast staysail is set. This method of bearing-to was commonly used by American whalers (Harland 1984: 227). However, Myrick has had difficulty in representing a backed sail, which would not be evenly concave as shown but would sag and show folds made by the top and the topmast shrouds behind it. The American ships have their main topmast braces through hounds, and the main courses of the Susan and Frances are braced forward (as for a brig).

Theme II. Homeward Bound (19 examples)

Next in popularity is the Susan, Barclay, Frances, or Ann homeward bound and approaching a low promontory, usually with a lighthouse and adjacent building. Again, and allowing for the bark-rig of the Ann (28.12.26), the vessels have almost identical rig. Royals are set, with studdingsails on the weather (starboard) side of the fore and main topsail and topgallant yards. The anomalous 28.01.18 is again excluded. However, an unexpected feature is that the main (course) braces of the Susan and the Frances are now leading aft, the more usual position.

There are many versions of the lighthouse and building, so it is merely a conventional indication of a home port. Some of the earliest pieces, for example 28.12.22, 28.12.26 (Ann1) and 29.01.02 (PMS1) show a tiny ship in port profile near the lighthouse. Other vessels in the scene (e.g., a schooner on 28.12.22 and on 29.01.02), are rare.

Theme III. Boiling and Killing Sperm whales (11 examples)

The third theme is another whaling scene with the vessels hove-to and boats lowered, found only on the Ann (29.01.07) and on Susan teeth dated before 29.03.24.

The tryworks between the main and mizen mast is in operation, boiling smoke. The vessels are hove-to, but now with main topsails and topgallants backed. The royal yards have been sent down but both jibs, the driver and the square sails including topgallants are set. However, headway has been reduced somewhat by unbending (removing) or furling the main course tightly (or hauling it up in the case of the Ann) and backing the main topsails and topgallant sails. The fore topmast staysail is sometimes very difficult to see, but it appears set on only four examples. An anomaly is 20.02.16, entitled “The Susan trying a sperm whale.” Although the tryworks is operating, her rig is similar to those of theme IV below, with which this example is included.

Theme IV. Cruising for Whales (4 examples)

There are only three examples with this title, 29.02.27-2, 29.09.04 (PMS 3) and 30.01, but 26.02.16 also belongs to this category, as above (Theme III and Table 1). They all portray the Susan under sail, with royals set on the main and men aloft on lookout on the fore and main masts, all but 29.02.07-2. However, on 20.02.16 the main course appears to be unbotched out of the way of the tryworks. On 30.01 both spencers are set, the only example of the Susan with any spencers visible. On 29.09.04 the starboard anchor appears to be down, which must be the result of surface damage or a mischievous vandal. This tooth has several areas of secondary scratching.

Theme V. At Anchor (2 examples)

The title on 29.09.04 (PMS3) is “The Susan at anchor,” and on 29.02.07-2 “The Susan lying at anchor at Monree [Maul],” which has low-lying land and distant shipping in view. The yards are lowered and the sails unbleee, tightly furled or brailed up, making the spars and the rest of the rigging much easier to see. The two Spencer gaffs are very obvious now, with wings from the peak of the gaff and the sails brailed up. The lead of the main topsail braces through lizards on the mizen are very clear. However, as when homeward bound, the main braces are now leading aft as usual.

There is no evidence to support the suggestion by Crosby (1955: 3) that PMS3 (29.09.04) (which he erroneously dates 29.09.14), is either crude and unfinished or that the technique is different, but it has been defaced in places.

A fuller description of Myrick’s treatment of the sails and rigging of the four vessels is forthcoming in a Special Issue of The American Neptune.
6. Whales, Whaleboats, and the Sea

Most of Myrick's scrimshaw is decorated with one of the two themes showing boats lowered amongst whales, but 29.01.07 (Amm) and some Susan teeth dated before August 1829 have both. The scene is very stylised with the elements shown in single file along the horizon. There are usually two or three boats and three whales and carcasses, most of them sperm whales. Rarely the scene has a carcass marked by a flag (a whiff or wail), e.g. 29.01.02 (PMS1) and 29.02.09, the latter having other unusual features. Apart from 29.01.02 (referred to later), the anomalous 28.12.18 and the boats of the Ann, there seem to be few significant differences between the whales, boats, and human figures from one whaling scene to another.

The sea is generally represented by fairly regular and parallel zigzag lines made by single knife cuts from below. There are usually four lines, rarely three (30-S1 and 30-F2) or five (29.01.13 and 29.02.12). These may overlap somewhat when they meet at the peaks or troughs and make a slightly darker area resembling a dot. Some early teeth are more varied and have between six (29.01.07) and ten (28.12.22) fairly regular but less parallel and more undulating lines. There are usually no predominately concave or convex surfaces, so the pattern of waves is reversible.

Each of the whaleboats has a crew of six men and are crude, stumpy, and largely undecorated apart from the odd dark stripe. However, the Ann is interesting, as both teeth show some of her boat with decoration at the bow or at both bow and stern (Fig. 10), decorations most often found on scrimshaw and paintings portraying English and especially Australian whalers (West & Credland 1995: 40).

Even on the same tooth there is considerable variation in the engraving of the crew, which usually become simpler from left to right of the scene (Fig. 12). The men are rudimentary, usually based on triangles, the head indicated by a little as a horizontal line, small triangle, or wedge across the top, and the arm by a single short line leading towards an ear. The men may be reduced to just two converging lines, although the most important members, at the bow and stern, are usually somewhat more elaborate. The figures were also discussed by Liddy (1998). The only recognisable implement is the occasional single- or double-bladed harpoon, though lances must have been in use.

One of the most consistent and eccentric features of Myrick's work is the number of spouts apparently coming from the elongated head and even the body of a single sperm whale under pursuit. These spouts, usually from three to six, rarely seven (29.08.24 ohw), can be faint and difficult to see (Fig. 12). However they are sufficiently pronounced on the two Susan teeth in the Nantucket Historical Association as to appear on the plastic replicas that are on sale. It has been suggested that the spouts represent schools of whales, but that would imply that only whales in schools were harpooned. However, there are occasional disembodied spouts (other than those directly above one whale), which might represent a school (Fig. 10). Occasionally a whale spout appears from other anatomically unlikely places too, e.g. on 29.01.22. The only piece with a clear, perspective image of a school is 28.12.18, which has many other uncharacteristic features. Often included in the picture is a sperm whale carcass or a head, usually with a tail fluke nearby. In reality, some of them could only belong to the same whale if it had the flexibility of an octopus.

However, on 29.01.02 (PMS1) the whales have the rounded body of a baleen whale, most probably intended as right whales. In addition to a carcass secured alongside the ship there are three others marked with walls which look very different from sperm whales. On this voyage the Susan recorded taking 121 barrels of whale oil (i.e., oil not from sperm whales) (Starbuck 1878: 258).

7. Flags

A. Flag Motif

Near the tip of each Myrick tooth is a pair of somewhat crude flags with crossed staffs and lance-shaped terminals. The anomalous 28.12.22 has two different flags, the two versions of the Ann of London have the British ensign, but all the other teeth have the Stars and Stripes, which is the national flag, merchant flag, and ensign of the United States. Most of these correctly show six light stripes bounded by seven dark. Rarely they show only 6 dark stripes (e.g., 28.12.22). There are between 20 and 32 stars, but these differences are not significant on scrimshaw as there is rarely any correlation between the number of stars and the date of the engraving. The stars are in the form of simple crosses, usually in four rows, occasionally three, with some rows fairly regular and others not.

A more upright flag staff obviously provides more space for the flag which ends at the tip divider. Susan 29.02.06 (NH1A) is unusual in that the tops of two smaller flags appear beneath the eagle's feet. The staffs on 29.08.20 (NH) are solid but most are open and appear transparent, at least in parts. The Barclay tooth has a thick staff with an irregular line along the centre. The back of the staffs end at the tip divider, each having crossed an engraved arc (the two Ann's) or, more commonly, a series of two dark and one light arcs. Other combinations, e.g., three dark and two light (as on 28.12.22), are rare.

The British ensigns on the two Ann teeth are recognisable as those worn by merchant and some naval vessels: a plain field with a red Union flag ("Union Jack") in the canton. Ann1 (28.12.26) has the ensigns enclosed in a plain arc and sinuous vine similar to those around most eagle motifs.

Unique is 28.12.18, which pairs the British ensign with the original Stars and Stripes of 1777, on which the stars in the canton are arranged in a circle instead of rows (Campbell & Evans 1995: 68).

Occasionally there are other motifs between the tops of the flag staffs. On 28.12.18 is a pair of overlapping hearts, and above these two small figures of men wearing tail coats and tall beaver hats, in keeping with fashion of the late 1820s. Beside one are the initials "SW" and the other "SK." On 28.12.22 is also a pair of overlapping hearts, but their lower parts are decorated with stripes similar to those of the flags. Another variation occurs on 29.08.20 (NH), where the signature and date between the flags. A pair of crossed arrows lies between the flags and anchor on the tip of 29.02-16.
B. Ships’ Flags

The most common flags on the Susa are the U.S. ensign, which is worn at the gall of the mizen sparker/driver, and a flag having a light diamond on a dark field, usually flying at the foremast head. This is probably the company or house flag of the managing agents. The Am (28.12.26) flies a British ensign (which in reality had a red field) and a plain, light colored flag at the fore. There are no company flags on the Barlow or the Frances.

One would expect to see flags on a vessel that was homeward bound but (apart from whaling signals) not necessary on one actively whaling. On Myrick’s ships, the largest number and variety of flags are on the scrimshaw with the earliest dates. There are very few on the teas dated from 29.01.02 to 29.03.24, but a company flag and ensign reappear on 29.08.28 and continue into the group of undated pieces, though the Barlow and the Frances have the ensign alone. Occasionally there are unidentifiable flags and others in unusual places. For example, 29.01.13 has the company flag at the main on both faces and an unidentified flag at the fore.

On the early dated pieces depicting the Susa approaching the lighthouse, a long homeward-bound pennant is visible at the mainmast head, e.g., 28.12.18 and 28.12.22; also 28.12.26 (Ann1). Neither 28.12.28 nor 29.01.07 (Ann2) has a homeward bound theme. The Am has a pennant on 28.12.26 and Susa a name flag on 29.01.02. Apart from 28.12.28, which has the anchor motif, there are identifiable national flags and pennants on many small ships. engraved on the tips of some early teeth and on the ships near the lighthouses.

8. Eagles

On all Myrick scrimshaw, apart from the two Am of London teeth, is an American eagle with outstretched wings, and the American Union shield (with six or seven dark stripes) on its breast. In its strangely puny tulips are the symbols of war and peace. Its left usually holds a narrow-leaved “olive branch” with several twigs, either sparse or bushy; and its right, generally five to seven arrows or “thunderbolts.” The beak usually holds two short ribbon scrolls in parallel, bearing in capital letters the motto “E PLURIBUS UNUM.” Apparently unique is 28.12.22 with the two scrolls opposite each other. The anonymous 28.12.18 has the motto in a border around the eagle.

The free ends of the scrolls usually mimic those carrying the titles of the main themes, so most turn upwards and taper to a point, but on some early teeth, e.g., 28.12.22 and 29.01.02, they curl over and end in a notch. Other shapes are rare, such as the undulating line on 29.09.01. Occasionally the two types of scroll differ, e.g., 29.02.12 (Monaco), 29.02.23 (Dari), and 30.01.01.

The eagle motif is enclosed by the tip divider at its feet and a single line arc around it, usually interwoven by a sinuous vine with pairs of narrow leaves, variously spaced. On 30.01.01 the arc has pairs of leaves, whereas pairs of dots replace the vine leaves on 30.01.01.

With the eagle is usually a number of simple stars in the form of crosses, sometimes in an arc over the bird, sometimes below, otherwise in various arrangements around it. Occasionally stars are absent, e.g., from 29.09.24.

Below the eagle’s feet on some of the earliest examples (e.g., 28.12.22, 28.12.28, and 29.01.02), is part of a globe with lines of longitude extending from a line of latitude encircling the pole. On 29.02.06 (NH1A) the ends of two small flags project from the tip divider towards the bird’s feet.

Some changes in Myrick’s technique and its idiosyncrasies can best be seen in the eagle motif, especially his handling of the feathers. On the wings they are generally grouped laterally into blocks separated by lines and then divided loosely into two vertical rows. On some early teeth (Fig. 7) the feathers appear as triangles made by small slits cut downwards from the top right side. In some places the ivory overlay has fractured and broken out. In and after August 1829 and on the undated pieces, Myrick used double cuts extensively on many features, though the feathers usually remain single-cut but appear as lines. Some feathers also illustrate the peculiarities of lines which are near or adjacent being cut from opposite directions (Fig. 9). Some even appear to be mirror images of one another. Whilst the former could be done by turning the tooth upside down, mirror images suggest that the other hand was used. This evidence first prompted the questions as to whether Myrick turned the specimen back and forth to engrave it and whether he could also have become ambidextrous.

9. Fouled Anchor

Variously positioned around the tip of all but the earliest dated Myrick teeth is a rather crudely delineated fouled anchor that resembles a wooden-stocked anchor of the late eighteenth / early nineteenth century. Although an anachronism to sailors, in reality the fouled anchor (i.e., with the anchor cable wrapped around its shank) was a common nautical motif, conventionally shown with the stock and arms lying in the same plane. It has also long been the allegorical symbol for Hope.

Myrick’s anchors generally adjoin the tip-divider, which partly truncates the lower arm. They are usually in outline (“open”), but on several pieces between 29.01.07 and 29.02.09 the anchor is solid, shaded with lines.

For strength, a wooden anchor stock was laminated and bound by iron bands. Some patterns, e.g., Steele (Loc. cit. 1794; Upham 1983:14), shows four stock bands with the straight edge uppermost, slightly tapers from below towards the ends, as on 29.08.22 (NH2A), 30.01.01, and 30.02.06. Steele’s anchor also tapers very slightly from side to side, though this is not visible on Myrick’s scrimshaw. However, especially before August 1829, Myrick’s anchors often have the stock apparently inverted, as on 29.01.02 (PM1) and 29.02.06 (NH1A). Rarely they taper from both above and below, as on 29.03.04.

Sources other than Steele show different tapers. In Lever (1819: 69) they taper from above and below, and in Nares (1862: 128-133) they taper equally in both the horizontal and vertical planes, so probably the shape of Myrick’s stocks has no significance.

In the early nineteenth century anchor stocks with both four and six bands were used (Upham 1983: 14, 19, 21). Myrick’s solid anchors have no stock bands, and stock bands are occasionally absent from his open stocks, e.g. 30.01.
Otherwise there are either four, e.g. 29.02.16 and 30-S1; or more usually six, especially on the pieces dating from August 1829, such as 29.08.24 (ODHS1) and 29.08.22 (NHA2), and on the undated pieces, e.g. 30-F1. However, the position of stock bands in Myrick’s engraving is inconsistent.

In most cases the anchor cable is indicated only by two lines, but on some of the teeth with early cusps the rope strands are delineated, usually laid counterclockwise (“left handed”), the correct lay for a cable, e.g. 29.01.22 (PMS2), 29.01.27, and 29.02.09. However, on 29.01.07 (Ann2) the lay is clockwise. However depicted, the cable is usually engraved as if transparent, with other parts showing through, at least in places. An exception is 30-F2. The ring at the top of the stock and the cable bent (knoted) to it are never convincing.

On some of the earliest pieces the anchor is replaced by a little ship in starboard profile, British or American as appropriate, e.g. 28.12.22, 28.12.26 (Ann1), and 29.01.02 (PMS1). In the case of 29.01.07 (Ann2) [Fig. 10] there is both a small solid anchor and a ship, whereas 28.12.18 has neither. There is a second very faint anchor on 20.09.04 (PMS3) which may not be original.

10. Conclusions

Myrick’s scrimshaw is characterised by a number of easily recognisable inscriptions and motifs. Variety is introduced by differences in detail, the way they are combined, their relative positions on the tooth and some small additional motifs. The early pieces, dating from December 1828 to March 1829, portray the Susan and the Ann. The later ones, from August to October 1829, portray only the Susan. There are also several undated examples of the Susan, Barclay, and Frances. Apart from the vessels portrayed, most of the earliest teeth have a wider range of differences than later examples, and a few small motifs are confined to the earliest. However, unique features do appear occasionally throughout the range of the scrimshaw, although some features initially thought to be unique were subsequently found on other specimens.

Analysis of the engraving techniques also revealed chronological changes. The early teeth were mainly engraved using single blade cuts that made narrow slits. On the earliest, the eagle feathers appear triangular, made with the tip of a blade. Later the feathers elongate and become lines. Broken-out areas are visible on Myrick’s work but are not usually extensive, which suggests that they were not a deliberate feature of his technique. In and after August 1829 there was a substantial difference, with some lines now made by double knife cuts in parallel. These produce wider grooves that hold more pigment than the single, slit-like cuts; so the contrast of the decoration is enhanced. However, these can also lose pigment more easily than narrow slits, and more of the later and undated specimens appear to have been given fresh pigment than early ones.

There is a tendency towards simplification and economy of line. The earliest pieces are the most varied and complex, and some look rather different from the later and undated works. The lettering also changes, with less elaborate capital letters, more angular small letters, and the use of the guide line to replace some of the horizontal elements. On the whaling scenes too, the figures on the earliest examples are rather less rudimentary than the later versions, though in many cases they also become simpler from left to right of each picture.

On the basis of the sails and rigging of the vessels portrayed, five nautical themes have been identified, one on each face of a tooth, some common, some rare. However, as time progresses there is less variety in the themes chosen. With two exceptions, pieces dated after 14 March 1829 and the undated pieces have only two of the five themes. Myrick’s scrimshaw is a hitherto unused source of information about working whaleships of the period. The rigging of all the vessels has at least one unusual feature, rarely illustrated elsewhere.

In general, Myrick engraved as if right handed, cutting from top right to bottom left. Nevertheless, many lines run in the opposite direction, as if he periodically inverted the work. More surprising is that some adjacent lines appear to be mirror images, as if he were ambidextrous. However, more research would be necessary to confirm this.

Another puzzling feature is how, if the dates be credible indications of the actual chronology of the scrimshaw, Myrick was apparently able to produce so much scrimshaw over so short a period of time. Even if a template had been used to facilitate the work, it would still be a prodigious output for a single whaling voyage.

I am indebted to the many people who made this research possible, particularly Stuart Frank, Donald Ridley, Garre Reid, and the staff of the Kendall Whaling Museum, and the directors, curators, and staves of: the Peabody Essex Museum of Salem; the Old Dartmouth Historical Society, New Bedford; the Nantucket Historical Association; and the American Museum of Britain, near Bath. Also to all the other institutions and private collectors who allowed their scrimshaw to be examined, and to the many others who have given help and hospitality. I thank John Harland, Mark Myers, and William Gilkeron for their advice and comments on the rigging of Myrick’s vessels. Any mistakes or lumberly language are entirely mine. -Janet West
Observations on the Physical Characteristics of Frederick Myrick's Scrimshaw

by Desmond T. Liddy (Sydney, New South Wales)

1. Pesky Little Fellows: Oarsmen and Human Figure Forms

This short note concerns a single feature of the work of Frederick Myrick as it appears on his unique assembly of engraved teeth: his rendering of human forms.

Myrick was one of the earliest pioneers of scrimshaw. There were few prototypes to shape his choice of medium or images. His creative response was to cover each tooth with the same design over and over again. Scrimshaw was supposed to be a palliative for the intense boredom generated by long whaling voyages. Here is a man who responds to the monotony by creating another form of monotony in his repetitive engraving of sperm whale teeth. The repetition of components in each engraving is one of the most striking features of Myrick's work.

Almost without exception, he shows the same basic motifs. He appears to have had in his head only one basic design or “geography” for a scrimshaw tooth. The dominant image on each side is a three-masted whaleship. On one side of each tooth, where the actual hunting process is shown, there is a view of the whaleboats ahead of the ship, and in them are the whaling at work, six in each boat. Very little effort was expended in the draftsmanship of these men. The most common shape [visible under high magnification] is an ogive — a triangle with sides bulging outwards. A head is sometimes omitted altogether. Arms are represented by short stick-like projections from the body. A similar simplification is seen in the boatheader (officer) and boatstretcher (harponeer).

The number and types of representations to be found for these men vary widely within each characteristic: seven variations in the design of the oarsmen, six variations for boatstretcher, seven for boatheaders. Where one of them is standing at the bow or stern of the whaleboat, a separation of the legs may be indicated, but the depiction will be of the crudest kind. In some of the later teeth a lookout is shown perched on the fore topgallant yard. There is also the very occasional appearance of a man on deck when a whale is being cut-in. In both cases these are rendered with a careless or superficial attention to detail.

Another oddity is the lack of stuffing in the cutting-in scenes. There is simply a "blanket-piece" of blubber suspended from the lifting gear, and no one operating a windlass or block-and-tackle to provide the lifting force. It might as well be magic to tear the blubber from the carcass fastened alongside.

So there he is, consistent, perhaps obsessive in the overall geography of his engraving, but sketchy and hurried in the details, without the meticulous precision evident in the work of many of the best scrimshaw artists.

2. Significance of the Dates on the Susan's Teeth

Of thirty-six scrimshaw teeth attributed to Myrick, twenty-eight are dated and eight are not. Twenty-six of the dated works depict the ship Susan of Nantucket and two the Ann of London. Of the undated pieces, five depict the Susan, two the ship Francis of New Bedford, and one the ship Barley of Nantucket. However, the significance of the dates remains a puzzle.

The voyage commenced in August 1826. The earliest tooth, dated 18 December 1828, is a crude prototype of the final product, with the text written in much larger letters than Myrick would use on his later work. This is closely followed by twenty-one more teeth— with dates from December 1828 through January, February, and March 1829. These conform to the standard Myrick format and have a sequence of dates separating each tooth from the next by only a few days, or at most three weeks. Then there is a period of five months of apparent idleness, followed by a burst of six teeth in three weeks during 20 August through 4 September 1829. In addition, there are eight undated teeth.

Myrick's seemingly intermittent productivity and periods of apparent idleness, and the presence of dates on some teeth and absence of dates on others, naturally lead to the question of the significance of dates on his scrimshaw.

While the dates can hardly be believed to be random, they are not necessarily the dates of execution (however, there does seem to be something of a stylistic evolution consistent with the sequence implicit in the chronology: see Donald E. Ridley et al., Frederick Myrick: Scrimshaw Catalogue Raisonné, Sharon, 2000); and the absence of dates and signatures on many of the pieces is also unexplained. Various hypotheses might be advanced to explain the dates and Myrick's apparently intermittent production of scrimshaw. Weather and the supply of teeth must certainly have been factors. Landfalls were likely another factor. In the absence of a logbook or journal of the voyage, few specifics are known about such matters, including whether the dates refer to particular events of the voyage. Likewise, if Myrick produced most or all of his scrimshaw for shipmates, for others he encountered in the course of the voyage (he surely could not have wanted all of the repetitive scrimshaw for himself), the dates could refer to significant events in the lives of others for whom he was working. Some of the undated pieces may have been produced during gaps in the sequence of dated pieces. He may have had several teeth underway at the same time, leading to comparatively large numbers being completed within a short span of time; he may even have had help smoothing and polishing the raw teeth to prepare them for engraving, though there is no evidentiary basis to suppose that he had help with the actual engraving.
Susan's Teeth: The Template Hypothesis

by Judith N. Lund (Old Dartmouth Historical Society)

After the first session on Susan's Teeth at the scrimshaw collecter's weekend at the Kendall Whaling Museum in 1990, I began to consider how they were made, as one way of thinking about their authenticity. Certainly a large number of these teeth look remarkably alike. It was not until a second tooth came into the Old Dartmouth Historical Society collection that I began to think seriously about the question. We put both teeth on the shelf together where it was easy to locate them. Looking at them side by side on the shelf each time I went into the storage area, it occurred to me that these teeth appeared more than just similar. Finally, I traced some of the lines from one tooth and superimposed the drawing on the other tooth. They were identical.

Side One of the Ashley Tooth (29-08-24) matched Side One of the Brayton Tooth (30-S3), and Side Two of the first matched Side Two of the second.

That certainly was interesting. That was also the end of my sample, as we only had two Susan's Teeth. Being a skeptic, particularly when it comes to scrimshaw, I mulled this over. Some people over the years have suggested that many of the Susan's Teeth must be fakes, in order to have so many that look alike. Our first tooth (29-08-24) was given to us in 1973 by Sarah Delano, the widow of artist Clifford W. Ashley; it has been his, and is pictured in his book The Yankee Whaler (1926). The second tooth (30-S3), given in 1993, came from the same neighborhood in Westport, Massachusetts, and had a vague family provenance tracing to about the same period. Was someone cranking them out in Westport?

I thought about the hypothesis of identical designs, and how that could be accomplished. What do we know about Myrick and the period in which he lived? He had had some formal schooling, as evidenced by the calligraphy sample in the Nantucket Historical Association collection. In the schools in the early nineteenth century, girls were taught needlework and decorative painting, while boys learned navigation, Latin, and more formal academic subjects to fit them for professions and trades.

For centuries there have been techniques for replication to simplify repetitive tasks. In New England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, wall and floor stenciling flourished as inexpensive ways to decorate in lieu of costly imported wallpaper and carpets. Stenciled theorem paintings, such as one pictured in the Carpenters' book, The Decorative Arts and Crafts of Nantucket, suggests that this craft was known and taught on the island in the early nineteenth century. Logbook stamps made it easier to make repetitive whales as needed on successful whaling voyages. A Nantucket quilting stamp, illustrated in the Carpenters' book, duplicated an identical design to be copied along the border of a quilt. Personal stencils of metal, such as one in the Old Dartmouth collection that belonged to Captain Job Terry in the early nineteenth century, enabled their owners to mark and label their goods easily. According to family tradition, the basis for the repeating design on a basket made by Manuel Eugenio aboard the bark Morningstar (Old Dartmouth Historical Society) was a dime.

On scrimshaw, pictures were often transferred from paper onto a tooth by pricking through the paper with a pin, thus tracing the lines from the source to the ivory. Several identical or nearly identical pictures could be produced in this way. A tooth in the Old Dartmouth collection has a repetitive border around the bottom, made by tracing something, probably a coin.

Examination of the two Susan's Teeth at hand really did not suggest the pounce method, so I began to consider some sort of template, like a stencil or pattern. I compared the ship portraits on photographs and photocopies of other Susan's Teeth, and the theory did not fall apart. When a third Susan's Tooth came into the museum on loan (29-02-07-01), I was able to compare it directly. It, too, was a perfect match to my original line drawings of the two in the Old Dartmouth collection.

On the basis of this experience, I copied all the pictures of Susan's Teeth I could get my hands on, and also examined the Susan and Barclay specimens in the Kendall Whaling Museum collection (30S-1 and 30B-1). The match rate was very good. The final test was examination of the teeth gathered for the Frederick Myrick Symposium.

The theory seems to hold. Twenty-two teeth examined directly were found to fit the pattern. There are basically two different designs:

1. The Coast of Japan or the Coast of Peru
2. Boiling and Killing, Homeward Bound, or Passage Home.

These are tabulated on Table 3 (page 14), which also includes the results of photo comparisons of teeth not available for direct examination. Almost every tooth fits. I also discovered that each tooth I examined has tick marks, usually wedge-shaped, made with the point of a knife, marking the tops of each of the masts and a second point down the mid, usually at the point where the shrouds meet the mast but sometimes where a stay meets the mast.

All of this suggests to me that Myrick was using some sort of guide or stencil to mark a portion of his design. The relationships of the yards and gaff to one another and to the masts is consistent and repetitive. The hulls, by contrast, are the result of lighter, less firm craftsmanship, and show considerable variation in shape. The lines of the sea are very accurately spaced, and identically so, on most of the teeth; if not part of the main stencil, the sea is evidently marked with a measuring device laid along a straight edge or ruler.

The degree of match of my original template drawings is reasonable for all but one of the teeth examined directly; 28-12-18 has designs of a different kind, though similar in general shape, as though they may have been done freehand. The fit to 30-S2, a variant tooth that is almost certainly not Myrick's work, was surprising: the match for the Homeward Bound side is good, the Coast of Peru side only fair.

Some matches are better than others; there appears to have been some slippage of the template. Certain parts of the stencil will be in perfect agreement, and then an interval — for instance, the distance between stays — will
increase, but the relationship of the sails to one another will remain the same, as it would had the whole stencil slipped a bit. Hold something up against a curved surface (like a sperm whale tooth), and it is easy to have a little slippage, particularly if the sea be rough that day. (I have several stenciled rooms in my home, and there is a fair amount of slippage that occurs in my efforts even though the stencils are designed to butt up against the ceiling; an my floor doesn't rock.)

What kind of stencil or guide? In truth, I have no idea. The lines that repeat are the yards, gaff, and some of the rigging. At first I wondered how the topsmasts and yards could be part of the same stencil, because the stencil would not hold together with intersecting lines. However, as almost all of the teeth I examined have a second tick mark about where the top of the shrouds meets the mast, or where a stay meets the mast — two points on each — it would make it possible to mark the topsmast with a straight line, and put it into the same relationship with the yards each time. The stencil could be one with slots to cut through with a knife or mark with a pencil. Or it could have holes like those used in transferring embroidery patterns, to pounce or force through the holes a sort of powdered chalk. It could simply be a tracing made on onionskin paper, blackened on the back with graphite, used in the manner of carbon paper. Paul Madden suggested that it could be a carved wooden stamp, such as a logbook or quitting stamp, but if this were the case, I would find the tick marks on the masts difficult to interpret.

Depending on the type of stencil envisioned, it could be any of several materials. Wall and furniture stencils were usually heavy paper or cardboard, or occasionally tin. The stencils used to decorate the rooms in the Captain John Cooledge House in Plymouth, Vermont, were made of leather. As I wrap my somewhat flexible materials around the teeth, I realize that the guiding material in Myrick's case must have been flexible, to conform to the varying curved surfaces: some sort of paper or leather, or a lightweight metal, such as copper sheathing.

Experiments with such publications as Darcy Lever's Young Officer's Sheet Anchor, or A Key to the Leading of Rigging and to Practical Seamanship (1819), which is known to have been an occasional source for scrimshaw illustrations, have thus far failed to turn up a definitive original source for Myrick's ships, if indeed there was an original source that would fit the templates.

Having determined, at least provisionally, that at least part of each of Myrick's scrimshaw engravings is copy work—even if he himself was the original source of the copies—the question arises, Does this interpretation demean the artist for being a copyist? I think not. Perhaps we need to look at Frederick Myrick in a new light. This is a man who made the sea his career for only a short time. Perhaps he did not enjoy his sojourn on the Susan. I believe he should be recognized for his entrepreneurial spirit. He seems to have figured out how to produce a good product quickly, no doubt earning himself rewards of money, time, recognition, or privilege while toughing out this, his last whaling voyage.

### Table 3. Template Results
Showing degree of match to templates on a scale of 1 to 4, **** being the best fit. Ellipses (...) indicate teeth (and sides of teeth) not examined.

<table>
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<th>Date/No.</th>
<th>Obverse</th>
<th>Reverse</th>
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<td>C+++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-12-22</td>
<td>Pr++</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-12-26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-12-28</td>
<td>C+++</td>
<td>B++++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-01-02</td>
<td>C+++</td>
<td>P+++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-12-26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-01-07</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>B+++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-01-20</td>
<td>+++++</td>
<td>B+++</td>
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<td>C++++</td>
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<td>B+++</td>
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<td>29-02-12</td>
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**Key:**
- A = At Anchor
- B = Boiling and Killing
- C = Coast of...
- Cr = Cruising
- H = Homeward Bound
- M = Mowee
- 1 = Examined from pictures only
- = Large template
Fig. 1. Both the American flag over a rainbow and the Union Jack over a single line arch appear on 28-12-18. Other than the two Ann of London pieces, this is the only one with a Union Jack. Also note the double line letters and numerals which appear on only the earliest work. [Photos: M. Zilberstein.]

Fig. 2. The eagle and motto motif appear on all U. S. flag pieces. On all but 28-12-18 the motto is contained in a ribbon held in the eagle's beak. Note that the the lower edge of the ribbon is used as a guide line, and forms the lower element of E, B, L, and U. The letters do not fill the full width of the ribbon.
Fig. 3. Myrick used five styles of anchors, two of which are illustrated here. All dated pieces through 29-03-27 (except 29-03-18) have inverted stocks, as shown at the left above as it appears on 29-02-08. The balance of the dated pieces and all of the undated pieces show the stock upright. All upright stocks, except 29-03-18 and 30-B1, have reinforcing bands, shown here as it appears on 30-F2 [lower picture above]. Note the lighthouse and light keeper’s home below the tip divider [top]. This is typical of the homeward bound scenes. [Photos: M. Zilberstein.]

Fig. 4 [above]. The letters a and y illustrate the progression from full rounded double line form to rounded single line, to the deep slashing style. Note also the use of the guide line to form the lower element of the body of the letter. This practice is evident on 29-03-24, and is fully developed on 29-08-20 shown here, second from the right. [Photo: M. Zilberstein.]

Fig. 5 [right]. Three examples of the evolution of Myrick’s style. Top: Reverse side of 28-12-18, bearing the earliest date; the engraving is shallow, resulting in much pigment loss, and the shape of the stern is incorrect. The latter was corrected on all subsequent pieces. Note the representation of the sea as many wavy lines. Center: Obverse of 28-02-08, where the sea has evolved to four lines of a V configuration. Typical of “boiling and killing” scenes, a blanket piece is being hoisted aboard. Note the house flag on the mainmast, which also appears on 29-01-13. Bottom: Obverse of 29-08-20. The sea is now more sharply defined, and the engraving shows a very firm hand. The whale with multiple spouts is believed to represent a school of whales, and is one of the hallmarks of his work. The shapes of the men in the boats, center and bottom illustrations, are discussed by Liddy (q.v., page 12). [Photo: M. Zilberstein.]
Fig. 6. Magnified section of the inscription on the trailing edge of 29.01.27 with oblique illumination to emphasize the surface contours. The engraving is done with single cuts from a fine blade held "right handed." The little slits run diagonally in from right to left and may widen slightly as the blade moves down. Ivory is slightly plastic and the blade has raised small flanges, the edges of which are highlighted. The dark areas to their right are cuts down into the ivory which are in shadow. Running almost horizontally are the very fine striations made by the scraper used to prepare the tooth. At the top are the zigzag lines of the sea. Almost vertically across them are the regular but diffuse marks made by a coarse file or rasp. The lettering is of the early type: rounded letters with serifs. The guide line below is very faint and has not been used as part of the letters. The words below are not highlighted, but an overshoot in the capital S on Swain is visible. (Photo: J. West.)
Fig. 7. Section of 29.01.27. The feathers on the neck of the eagle are pick marks made by the tip of a fine blade. Highlighted flanges show little triangular pockets that open to the right. In a few places the flanges have broken away and the triangle looks darker. Visible are the fine vertical lines from a scraper and the shorter broader horizontal marks of a rasp. On the leg to the left, the slits open to the left and the triangular shape is roughly inverted. The tooth must have been turned upside down to do this. [Photo: J. West.]

Fig. 8. Magnified section of the lower foremost on the obverse side of 30-S1. The near-vertical lines are the single cuts delineating the mast and rigging (shrouds). Diagonally to the left is the fore spencer gaff. Horizontally to the right is part of the foresail yard with the fore stay above it. These three darker lines are made with two blade cuts at an angle to form a V shape. The overrun of the two cuts shows two little tails from the inner edges of the spencer gaff and the stay. [Photo: Donald E. Ridley.]
Fig. 9. Magnified section of the eagle wing of 30-51 with the feathers made by lines. The smoother of the two edges is the one that was at the back of the blade as it was moved down. The jagged edge was uppermost and the ivory has chipped and fractured. Most of the lines are smoothest on the right; cut right handed. However, there are a number of adjacent lines cut in the reverse direction, as if the tooth were turned upside down. These are not mirror images, as the fracture lines on the rougher edges, though not easy to see, run in the same direction. The two horizontal lines indicate the separation of the feathers into blocks. [Photo: Donald E. Ridley.]

Fig. 10. Section of the least-damaged area of 29.01.07 (Ann2), showing the bowsprit of the Ann whaling on the coast of Japan, and the trailing edge below with part of the verse engraved along a guide. The two boats have distinctive crescent-shaped decoration at the bow and at the bow and stern, respectively. There is a single sperm whale to the left, then a number of spouts which may indicate a school. On the reverse is a many-spouted whale; a typical one is shown in Fig. 12). Only single blade cuts are used, one of several early features. The letters are rounded and with serifs, although, uncharacteristically, Myrick's name is with the dedication. The tip has both a small ship and a solid anchor above the Chevron border. [Photo: J. West.]
Fig. 11. Detail showing the bark rig of the Ann. On the left is the mizen mast with the upper part of the spanker visible and the gaff topsail above it, furled. Between the masts is the mizen topmast staysail, but it is set on a horizontal stay leading to the upper part of the main topmast and not on the mizen topmast stay itself. Behind it is the main topsail, below which are the two cutting tackles, each with two dark blocks. Below the staysail is the upper part of the main spencer on its gaff. [Photo: J. West.]

Fig. 12. Part of 29.01.27 (reverse side), showing a sperm whale, apparently with four spouts. The boat on the right with oars peaked is fast to a whale and a lance is ready at the bow. The signature and date are between the lines of the tip divider. The sails and rigging around the bowsprit are very clear, even showing a bowline on the fore course. The wavy bands visible between the tip border and the centre boat are the edges of the layers of persistent cementum surrounding the tooth which have worn down and darkened differentially. [Photo: J. West.]
Chronology of Frederick Myrick (1808–1862)

by Stuart M. Frank (The Kendall Whaling Museum)

1808 Frederick Myrick born on Nantucket, April 28. (The date of his birth is absent from the Vital Records of Nantucket, but is definitively known from burial records of Sennett, New York; reported by Ernest Helides.)


1818 Myrick baptized on Nantucket (Vital Records of Nantucket).

1821 While attending the Franklin School on Nantucket, at age 13 Myrick produces a formal penmanship specimen (collection of the Nantucket Historical Association).

1822 Fellow-Nantucketer Edward Burdett (1805–1833) embarks on his first voyage, ship Foster of Nantucket, June 24, 1822, returns to Nantucket December 27, 1824.

1824 Burdett makes his first scrimshaw (the first known engraved pictorial scrimshaw by an American hand), vessel unknown, in the Pacific, circa 1824.

1825 Myrick is issued a Seaman’s Protection Paper (passport) at New Bedford in June; embarks on his first voyage, July 8, as a green hand, ship Columbus of New Bedford, Captain Thomas Brock, Jr., to the South Atlantic whaling grounds (returns to New Bedford June 26, 1826).

1826 Myrick embarks on his second voyage, ship Susan of Nantucket, Captain Frederick Swain, to the Pacific Ocean whaling grounds, August 21.

1828 Earliest known date on Myrick scrimshaw, ship Susan, December 18 (not December 10, as erroneously reported by Crosby).

1829 Latest known date on Myrick scrimshaw, ship Susan, September 4. The Susan arrives back at Nantucket, October 27. The 38 months’ voyage, comprising about 32 months in the Pacific and the remainder in transit, produced 2,582 barrels of sperm oil and 121 barrels of right whale oil, which would have made it a substantial success.

1831 The East India Marine Society, Salem, Massachusetts, catalogues two Susan’s Teeth by Frederick Myrick (29-01-02 and 29-01-22) as “Tooth of a Sperm Whale, curiously carved” and “Another, carved by the same hand,” with no mention of the artist or the pictures engraved on them; likewise catalogues anonymously the tooth by Edward Burdett depicting the Chinchilla and Tamahka.

1833 Myrick marries Mary A. Folger, a native of Sennett, New York, who was living at the time on Nantucket; on Nantucket, January 3, 1833. The couple produced six children, three daughters and three sons, all born on Nantucket between 1839 and 1847.

1847 Myrick family moves to central New York State, region of Auburn and Sennett, where some 22 former whaling masters had already settled with their families. Possible later sojourn in City of Sheboygan, Michigan (unconfirmed), thence returned to Sennett.

1862 “Died in Sennett, August 21, 1862, Capt. [sic] Frederick Myrick, aged 54 years and 4 months” (Auburn N.Y. Daily Advertiser and Auburn Union, 24 August 1862; reported by Ernest Helides). “New York burial records indicate that [Myrick] was originally buried in the North Cemetery at Sennett, New York[,] and that on December 14, 1899 his body was disinterred and re-buried at the Fort Hill Cemetery in Auburn, New York, where it lies in a family plot with his wife Mary [who died in Sennett on 1 December 1899 at age 89] and three of his five known children… The grave is marked with a sturdy, solid gray granite tombstone with raised low-relief lettering ‘...’” (Helides, “The Mystery and Discovery of Frederick Myrick’s Gravesite,” unpublished MS, 1998, Kendall Whaling Museum archive).
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SYMPOSIUM ON FREDERICK MYRICK

Held at the Seventh Kendall Whaling Museum
Scrimshaw Collectors' Weekend

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