

## Death Faced Whale Boat Crew Lost From Cape End Schooner S. R. Soper

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On February 25, 1853 the schooner S. R. Soper sailed from Provincetown for a cruise in the Atlantic ocean after whales. Nothing unusual happened until about the last of July. One morning the crew descried a school of whales. They immediately lowered three boats, each containing five men, and commanded by the captain, the first mate and the second mate. The second mate killed the first whale and towed him to the ship. The other whales then started off, pursued by the boats of the captain and the first mate. This was in longitude 77, latitude 31. They continued pursuit, and finally Captain Soper fastened to and killed a forty-barrel sperm whale.

By this time night began to set in. Those in the boats looking in every direction could see no schooner. Their predicament was startling. They had no provisions or water. After consultation they concluded to stick to the whale until morning. With returning daylight they hoped to find their vessel. When morning broke, they scanned the horizon anxiously but saw nothing.

All that day they cruised around after her. At night they held another consultation. They had compasses but no time. Captain Soper ordered that during the night they should each go in a certain direction, and meet in the morning. The first mate was Samuel Genn of Provincetown. Genns (later Ginns) and Sopers were both notable whaling families of that town and time. Though Genn thought he followed the directions carefully, when morning dawned he and his men could see nothing of the captain's boat.

Much of that day they searched for Captain Soper, but in vain.

Genn and his men suffered dreadfully from hunger and thirst, in their open whaleboat under the fierce heat of the summer sun. Wisely they steered N.N.W. for the nearest land. Their sail was not much use to them. Once in a tough sea they saw at a distance a vessel, which did not see them. Genn deemed it impossible with any safety to steer for her. So they watched her disappear with the feeling that their last hope was leaving them.

The wind began to blow severely. Genn felt obliged to "drug" with the oars and whaling lines. Thus they rode out the gale. Then they again put up their poor sail. All were almost at the last gasp of suffering. Their lips were black. Death, they thought, was staring them in the face. On the fifth and sixth day they drank some salt water. Then in the evening they made Cape Fearm, went ashore, and in time reached Beaufort, North Carolina. Genn and Cornelius Prince of Boston worked their passage to New York, and went on to Provincetown.

There they found that Soper and his five men had regained the schooner within twelve hours after parting from Genn's boat. The second mate and his men were already on board. So all got safely home. Genn's story of his ordeal appeared in the Whalemens' Shipping List and Merchant's Transcript of New Bedford for August 23, 1853. There may be Genn and Soper descendants in Provincetown today. Who can tell us more about these interesting families?

### Yarmouth Register September 12, 1890

#### PROVINCETOWN.

- 20 Portuguese immigrants arrived by train Tuesday.
- Steamer A. B. Nickerson shot a finback whale off Wood End Monday.
- Capt. Norman McKenzie, of the wrecked schr. Lawrence McKenzie, arrived home Monday.
- Licenses for 19 fish traps have been granted by the town to be operated the present season.

## About Leviathan

- 1957 -

Since the dawn of history men have been telling about how big whales are. But only recently have they been weighed and measured scientifically.

Two females, each about 89 feet long, have been measured. The results live up to the tallest of tall tales.

One of these huge beasts, taken on a Japanese whaler in 1949, weighed 124 tons, or 248,000 pounds. The other, brought ashore in 1926 at Stromness in South Georgia, an island off Antarctica, weighed 134 tons, or 268,000 pounds.

This would indicate that whales average about a ton and a half a foot. Traditionally they have always been thought to weigh a ton a foot.

It has been discovered that on an 89-foot whale there are about fifty-six tons of "meat," or muscle and gristle. The bones weigh 22 tons, the blubber 26, the blood eight.

There are one and a half tons of intestines, a half-ton of stomach, a ton of liver, and the kidneys and heart each weigh a half-ton.

The uterus also weighs a half-ton, the ovaries twenty-five pounds. The tongue runs about three tons, the lungs more than one ton.

The aorta, or main artery, of a big whale is large enough for a good-sized man to squirm his way through it into the chambers of the heart.

A baby blue whale is 25 feet long when born, and over 50 feet long by the time he is weaned from his mother. An adult blue whale weighing a hundred tons can shoot along through the water for days on end at fifteen knots. When he feels like it he can effortlessly speed up to twenty knots and more.

The two species of whale most widely taken today by the great Scandinavian whaling ships are two members of the rorqual group—the blue whale and the finner, or common rorqual.

Rorquals are whales with whitish, pleated underparts up forward. What these pleats are used for no one knows. Old-timers say they are used to help the animal brake himself down while maneuvering.

Q. When were whale oil burners used? What did they look like?

A whale oil burner is a special type of whale oil lamp that uses a font or fuel reservoir, has a font or fuel reservoir, has slots for regulating the length of the wick.

John Miles patented a whale oil burner in England in 1787. His lamp had a fuel reservoir, several wicks, and was made of metal or glass. Many of his lamps were made as "peg lamps". They fit into the socket of a candlestick and the added height gave more light.

The whale oil burner was popular until whale oil became expensive. The Argand lamp replaced the whale oil burner about 1830.

### PROVINCETOWN WHALING LIST

AUGUST 21, 1884:

Reported:—Schooner Agate, Captain Rich, sailed March 22, 1884, reported August 2, Lat. 36-20, Long. 74-38.

Schooner Alcyone, Captain Ewell, sailed June 9, 1884, reported July, Lat. 36, Long. 74.10.

Schooner Antarctic, Captain Bell, sailed October 31, 1883, reported July 14, 1884, Lat. 36.15, Long. 74.25.

Schooner Bloomer, Captain Smith, sailed December 17, 1883, reported June 27, 1884, at San Domingo.

Brig D. A. Small, Captain Curren, sailed June 13, 1883, reported March 25, 1884, at St. Helena.

Schooner Ellen Rizpah, Captain Dunham, sailed February 15, 1884, reported in August at Lat. 36.20, Long. 74.38.

Schooner Gage H. Phillips, Captain Dyer, sailed June 7, 1884, and is unreported.

Schooner Mary G. Curran, Captain Dyer, sailed March 13, 1884, reported July 22, Lat. 36.10, Long. 74.03.

Schooner Quickstep, Captain Marston, sailed February 15, 1884, reported June 12th, Lat. 36, Long. 74.10.

Schooner Rising Sun, Captain Thomas Taylor, sailed March 13, 1884, reported June 4th, at San Dominica.

Schooner Wm. A. Grozier, Captain Roberts, sailed June 14, 1883, reported May 25th, at the Barbadoes.

Port of Provincetown,  
March 1, 1871

Whaling Schooner Montezuma, Leach, sailed Friday 17th. Whaling Schooners Gracie M. Parker, Capt. Dyer, and Ada M. Dyer, sailed Monday 20th. for West Indies, humpbacking until the season for sperm whales on Charleston grounds, to return in the Fall. Schooner O. Remington is reported at Barbadoes with 312 bbls. sperm oil. Ten mos. out. Schooner Elbridge Gerry St. Vincent, 155 bbls. sperm, 150 black oil—20 months out. . . .

Jan. 25, 1871

Schooner Clara L. Sparks, Capt. Atwood of this port, arrived at Barbadoes 1st. inst.—clean. . . .

Feb. 17, 1871

The story that the Brig. Antilles, in this port last week, picked by a boy in the bay, was a hoax. It all originated from the fact that a year ago the Capt. of the vessel found a boy adrift in the Harbor and rescued him. The boy recently seen aboard was the Capt. son. . . .

FRESH-FISH LANDING JUNE, 1902:

The schooner Sea Fox arrived Tuesday from the fishing banks with 2500 barrels of salt cod and 7000 pounds large fresh cod.

Yarmouth Register  
April 26, 1890

—Stmr. Dolphin, Capt. Smith, shot a whale in the bay Saturday. He was towed in Sunday and sold to the Nicker-son oil works.

Yarmouth Register  
February 14, 1891

A letter from on board sch. Antarctic of Provincetown, reports her arrival at St. Lucia Jan. 14th, having taken 100 bbl. whale, but saved only 80 bbls. Spoke at sea Jan. 4th, bark George & Mary; schs. Adelia Chase and Mary E. Simmons, N. B.. all well. No oil since last report.

Schs. Wm. A. Grozier and Geo. H. Phillips sail from Provincetown the last of the month on whaling cruises.