



Fin-Back Whale, largest ever taken in Provincetown. (John R. Smith-1886)

"Killed by Captain Joshua S. Nickerson in the whaling schooner A.B. Nickerson. It measured 65'4" in length; 14'5" across the tail; length of lower jaw 11'; length of fins 10'; girth 37'; estimated weight 136 tons; capacity of mouth when closed, thirty barrels.

Note the dog standing beside it.

The whale was sold to a Chicago syndicate; special cars were made to transport it, and it was taken through the western country on exhibition.

..... from H. A. Jennings' "Provincetown, or Odds & Ends from the Tip End"

July 1, 1948

Playful Whale Takes Youth For Ride Brings Him Fame And Spot On Radio

Sixty-Foot Mammal Bunts Lobstering Dory—Young Frank Cabral Lands On Animal's Back—To Tell His Story On "We, The People"

A playful 60-foot whale nudged the dory that 17-year-old Frank E. Cabral Jr., was using Sunday morning, about 8, while helping his father pull lobster pots off Race Point Station, stove the boat, threw the youth into the air, none too playfully, caught him on its back for a fast trip of several seconds, landed him on the front pages of all the metropolitan papers, and finally arranged for the young man's appearance, shortly, on the radio program, "We, the People" in New York City.

All this because young Frank is the first person on the record ever to have ridden a whale, bareback, or any other way. To be sure, many a Cape Ender of old whaling days took the "Nantucket sleighride", their dory at one end of a taut line, an enraged whale with the other end in a harpoon in its back, scudding with breath-taking speed over the sea. Jeremiah Digges in "Bowleg Bill, the Sea-Going Cowboy" relates how Bowleg rode and broke "Slick-britches", the giant hoss-mackerel in Provincetown Harbor. But for actually mounting and riding a whale, coming through practically unscathed—young Frank Cabral seems to have the honor all to himself.

Whale Sighted

Sunday morning was fairly pleasant and clear, and the Cabrals, father in one 16-foot dory and the son in another, were pulling their lobster pots about a quarter of a mile off the end of Cape Cod, some distance away from their 30-foot gas lobster boat. The father was the first to sight the huge mammal cavorting about 500 feet away, breakfasting, probably, on fresh mackerel. It came toward him and so close that his boat was almost capsized by the wash. He yelled a warning to the son as the whale turned in his direction.

In a moment he saw the dory dart from the water and the boy catapulted into the air about seven feet, it seemed. But when the youth came down he didn't sink. His father said

afterwards that he appeared to "be sitting on top of the water and then in a few seconds I could see that he was swimming." Mr. Cabral started rowing toward his son who was then making for his sinking dory. Both reached it in time to lift the outboard motor out, put it in the sound boat, haul the somewhat shaken youth in and tie on the damaged dory. They pulled for the gas boat and there they examined the boat and the whale had struck. They found planking smashed in the bow and in the jagged hole was a hunk of whale hide and blubber, showing that the playful whale had been scratched, at least, for its prank. The Cabrals raised the bow of the damaged dory over the stern of the larger boat and brought it back. They even saved all of their lobsters.

A Bit Shaky

Young Cabral was a bit shaky, and he had cut his finger and bruised a toe. At first it was hard to realize just what had happened. All that he knew was that when he came down from his sudden somersaults, he didn't sink. And he could feel that he was sitting on something slithery, and he figured that he must have been on the back of the whale several seconds—although it seemed longer—before it went down and left him to swim for the boat. Had it remained on the surface, the youth might have been taken for a considerably more extensive ride.

Although he was wearing boots, which he did not kick off, Frank Jr., was able to swim to his sinking dory, and he said that his early training as a Boy Scout in Quincy where he won swimming awards, had "paid off". He will be a senior in the Provincetown High School next year.

Yesterday afternoon he was out on the beach, in back of his father's fish shop, helping Jule Costa repair the damage done by the whale that gave him the ride, and awaiting word from New York that will take him to the city for his big moment on a national radio hook-up.