

500 A.D.

Technologies emerge among Inupiat peoples of coastal northern Alaska for taking bowhead whales during the whales' regular migrations to the Arctic Ocean

1602

Ashore at Cuttyhunk Island in Buzzards Bay, English explorer Bartholomew Gosnold reports finding "many huge bones and ribbes of whales"; three years later explorer George Weymouth records methods of American Indian whale hunting



1640

First organized whale fishery begins on Long Island at Southampton; settlers, originally from Lynn, Massachusetts, employ Indians to man whaling boats and pay them with a percentage of captured oil instead of wages

Joseph Russell, first settler of what is now New Bedford, outfits the *Manufacture*, the first whaling vessel known to have sailed from this harbor

1756

The *Rebecca* arrives in New Bedford, the first American whaleship to return with a cargo of oil from the Pacific

At 116 vessels, Nantucket boasts the largest whaling fleet of any port in the United States

1793



1807

As nearby whaling grounds run dry, shipyards build larger vessels to run farther afield. Nantucket's shallow, sandbar-choked harbor cannot accommodate them, and securing crew, supplies, and capital on the island is hard. This year New Bedford surpasses Nantucket as nation's leading whaling port

1823

1620 English Separatists settle Plimoth Plantation in Massachusetts

1790 Samuel Slater builds the first steam-powered cotton-spinning machine in the United States

1812-14 The War of 1812, which bans the export of American products, devastates the American whaling industry; tonnage plummets from about 12,000 in 1803 to 562 in 1814

1848

Lewis Temple, African American blacksmith from Richmond, Virginia, and New Bedford resident from about 1829, invents the toggle harpoon, one of the only true technological improvements in American whaling under sail



Temple invoice  
Courtesy of the Trustees of the New Bedford Free Public Library



Courtesy of the Trustees of the New Bedford Free Public Library

1857

329 whaling vessels – more than half of the total American fleet of 593 – are registered in New Bedford, the city fleet's peak year



"Whaleships and Casks of Oil at Central Wharf" Stereoview by Stephen F. Adams, New Bedford, about 1870; courtesy of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society-New Bedford Whaling Museum



"Grand Ball given by the whalers in honor of the discovery of the oil wells in Pennsylvania" Illustration in Vanity Fair, 1861

1861

The federal government buys 24 idle New Bedford whalers for the "Stone Fleet," a planned blockade of Savannah and Charleston harbors. New Bedford captains sail the vessels, loaded with stone, and sink them so that Confederate vessels cannot gain access to supplies during the war



"Captains of the Stone Fleet" Photograph by Charles and Edward Bierstadt, New Bedford, 1861; courtesy of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society-New Bedford Whaling Museum



Postcard of Wamsutta Mills, early 1900s  
Courtesy of the Trustees of the New Bedford Free Public Library

1849 New Bedford's first textile factory, Wamsutta Mill Number One, begins operation with 10,000 spindles for spinning cotton thread and 200 looms for weaving cloth

1858 Failure of Ohio Life Insurance and Trust and withdrawal of spiraling bankers' balances in New York City trigger Panic of 1857 in late August; 48 of 68 whalers returning to New Bedford and Fairhaven this year lose money

1859 In Titusville, Pennsylvania, Edwin L. Drake becomes first person in the world to tap petroleum at its source, beginning an immediate boom in oil production and refining

1861-65 During the Civil War, the rebel cruisers *Alabama*, *Florida*, and *Shenandoah* destroy 46 American whaling vessels, more than half of them from New Bedford

1865

City whaling merchant Edward Mott Robinson and his sister-in-law Sylvia Ann Howland, heir to the whaling fortune of Gideon Howland Jr., die within months of each other. Together they leave more than \$5 million in cash and trust to Robinson's daughter Henrietta. Married two years later, "Hetty" Green turns her whaling inheritance into the nation's largest fortune by the turn of the century



Hetty R. Green  
Howland Family Collection,  
courtesy of the Trustees of the New Bedford Free Public Library



Whaleships wrecked in the ice near Point Barrow, 1876  
From a sketch by Captain William H. Kelley of the *Marengo*.  
Illustration in Harper's Weekly, 18 November 1876

1871 & 1876

Unpredictable September weather in 1871 traps 32 whaling vessels (22 from New Bedford) in the Arctic ice pack off Point Belcher; Seven whalers rescue crew, but 33 ships and more than \$1.6 million in outfits and cargo are lost. Five years later, another 12 whaling vessels are crushed in the Arctic ice in July and August

1879

Former New Bedford whaling master William Lewis launches the *Mary and Helen*, the first steam-powered whaling vessel in the United States. In 1880 it arrives at San Francisco with one of the largest catches in the history of the Arctic whale fishery. By 1886 San Francisco surpasses New Bedford as the nation's leading whaling port



1900

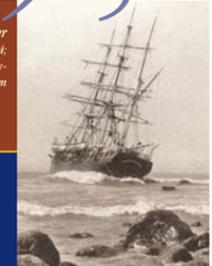
21 vessels in New Bedford whaling fleet this year. Of the nine vessels that leave the port this year, five have Azorean-born captains; 46 percent of all crew members are Cape Verdean

1900 New Bedford is the largest producer of fine cloth in the United States

1924 & 1925

The bark *Wanderer*, the last whaling vessel to leave New Bedford harbor, departs in late August with insufficient crew and wrecks off Cuttyhunk Island in 1924; a year later, the *John R. Manta* brings the city its last whaling cargo

Wreck of the *Wanderer*  
Photograph by Albert Cook Church, 26 August 1924;  
courtesy of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society-New Bedford Whaling Museum



1914-18 World War I