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A typical scene, near the Nantucket harbor, during the island's heyday as the oil capital of the world. Image, by an unnamed photographer, online via [Mystic Seaport](#).

Although he'd lost the *Essex*, [George Pollard](#) was given command of *Two Brothers*, another whaleship. It was the same ship which had brought him home to Nantucket (where he arrived on August 5, 1821).

The rest of the survivors, including Charles Ramsdell (Pollard's whaleboat companion), did not need as much time to recover as Pollard. They were able to leave Chile earlier, aboard the *Eagle*, arriving at Nantucket on June 11, 1821.

Nancy Bunker Coffin—Owen Coffin's mother—could never reconcile herself to what had happened to her son. It was hard for her to process— or accept—that Pollard was alive because her son was dead.

Within the year, Owen Chase published his narrative. Calling it *Wreck of the Whale Ship Essex*, he most likely had help writing the work from William Coffin, Jr. His story omits several key facts:

- He and Matthew Joy recommended against turning back to Nantucket after the Gulf-Stream knockdown four days after leaving port;
- He and Matthew Joy recommended against sailing to the Society Islands after the wreck of the *Essex*;
- He did not harpoon the massive sperm whale, between the first and second attacks, when he had the chance to do so.

No one knew that Chase had failed to harpoon the whale until Thomas Nickerson's narrative was rediscovered, and published, 163 years later. Nickerson's story is called *The Loss of the Ship "Essex" Sunk by a Whale*.

For some reason—perhaps because Nantucketers disliked his airing of the details of the wreck and its aftermath—Owen Chase did not sail on another Nantucket-based ship until eleven years later.

When Pollard took command of *Two Brothers*, he left Nantucket on November 26, 1821 (about 3½ months after returning from Chile). With him, aboard his new ship, were Thomas Nickerson and Charles Ramsdell.

Unfortunately for everyone concerned, *Two Brothers* was lost in a bad storm off the Hawaiian island of Oahu. Losing a second ship meant that Pollard's whaling career was over. Returning to Nantucket, he became the

island's night watchman.

Although they never had children, George and Mary Pollard had a good life together. He was known to hoard food, however, and every year—on the anniversary of the *Essex* attack—he locked himself in a room and fasted.

Pollard's First Mate on the *Essex*—Owen Chase—soon became a captain. In control of the *Florida*—a New Bedford ship—he returned to port with around 2,000 barrels of oil. In command of the *Winslow*, another New Bedford ship, Chase returned with 1440 barrels of oil. By that time, he was only 28 years old.

Chase had three children with his first wife. After her death, he married Nancy Slade Joy, Matthew Joy's widow. As Nantucket stories go, Chase eventually became insane. The memories of what had happened, during and after the wreck of the *Essex*, continued to haunt him for the rest of his life.

Thomas Nickerson ran a Nantucket boarding house with his wife. The youngest of the *Essex* crew, he was the last of the wreck's survivors to die. His home still stands on North Water Street.

Although new homes cover the landscape of Nantucket Island these days, the old homes of Pollard and Chase are also still standing. Pollard's home, in Centre Street, is red-shingled. Chase's home, still unremodeled, is located on Orange Street. It is known by its water-stained clapboards and dark green trim.

One day near the end of 1997—hundreds of years after Nantucket had lost its status as the oil capital of the world—a sperm whale swam by the island. The animal was sick and died, despite the islanders' efforts to save its life.

People decided it might be a good idea to keep the skeleton of this massive creature. It would help them to give homage (in a way) to the type of whale which had once made the island so prosperous.



Individuals charged with the job of preparing the whale for display learned firsthand how hard it was for their forefathers to work with such massive creatures:

- The whale's head contained around 130 gallons of oil (called spermaceti).
- A single piece of blubber—measuring four-square feet by eight-inches thick—weighed around four hundred pounds!
- The whale's largest bone—its massive cranium—weighed more than a ton.

Nantucket is no-longer a powerhouse on the world's stage, but it still has a reminder of the products which

once made it great. The saved bones, of the whale which came to the island to die in late 1997, are still oozing oil.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/LIFE-after-the-WRECK-of-the-ESSEX-In-the-Heart-of-the-Sea-The-Tragedy-of-the-Whaleship-Essex>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/LIFE-after-the-WRECK-of-the-ESSEX-In-the-Heart-of-the-Sea-The-Tragedy-of-the-Whaleship-Essex>

Media Stream



Nantucket as the Oil Capital of the World

Mystic Seaport; Photo of Nantucket, during its whale-oil heyday, by an unnamed photographer. Year is also unknown.

View this asset at:

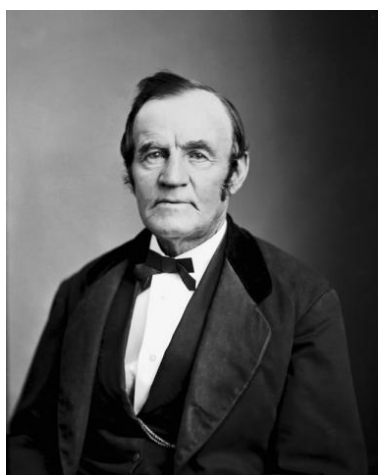
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Nantucket-as-the-Oil-Capital-of-the-World>



Owen Chase in Later Life

Image of Owen Chase, in later life, online via Nantucket Historical Association.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Owen-Chase-in-Later-Life>



Thomas Nickerson - In the Heart of the Sea

Public-domain image depicting Thomas Nickerson, in later years, online via Nantucket Historical Association.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Thomas-Nickerson-In-the-Heart-of-the-Sea>

Sperm Whale Skeleton at Nantucket Museum

Late in December, 1997, a male sperm whale in distress reached Nantucket Island. Once the whale-oil capital of the world, Nantucket and its residents—near the end of the 20th century—had a very different view of whales than they'd had the prior century.

Despite efforts to save the bull whale, which measured about 46 feet, it died on January 1, 1998. It died on the beach at Siasconset, a small village on the eastern end of Nantucket Island.

This image depicts that whale's skeleton which is on display at Nantucket Historical Association's Whaling Museum.

Click on the image for a better view.

Image online via Nantucket Historical Association, owner of the museum where this sperm-whale's skeleton is displayed.

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