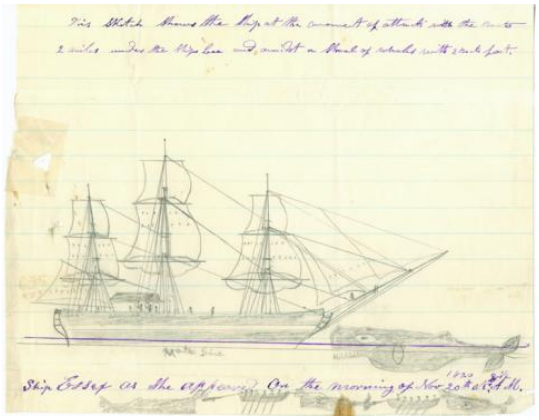
Essex Whale Attack by Thomas Nickerson



Thomas Nickerson wrote a narrative about the whale attack on the *Essex*. He included drawings in his work. This image depicts one of those original drawings.

Nickerson called his story *The Loss of the Ship "Essex" Sunk by a Whale and the Ordeal of the Crew in Open Boats*. He wrote it around 1876, when he sent it to Julius Warren "Leon" Lewis (a writer who sometimes stayed at Nickerson's boarding house in Nantucket).

It was Lewis, a summertime visitor to Nantucket, who suggested that Nickerson should write his story about the whale attack and the awful ordeal the Essex crew endured thereafter. He was living in Penn Yan—in upstate New York—when he received Nickerson's manuscript.

Instead of publishing the work, however, Lewis—who had lots of debts and creditors—sailed to England with the 14-year-old niece of his deceased wife. Among the things, which Lewis left behind, was Nickerson's manuscript.

When Thomas Nickerson died, in 1883, his story had not been published. With his death, went his story. For nearly a century, his work was lost.

It was never really lost, though. Darius Ogden, one of Leon Lewis' friends, took possession of some of his items before they were sold to pay-off Leon's creditors. One of the items which Ogden removed was Nickerson's manuscript.

Over the years, as Ogden's home—on the corner of Clinton and Hamilton Streets in Penn Yan—was passed-down from one generation to another, someone put Nickerson's manuscript in the attic. It remained there, until 1960, when an Ogden family member—Ann W. Finch—rediscovered it.

Not realizing the manuscript told a real story, Finch kept the document in her study (at her home in Hamden, Connecticut). Visiting Nantucket, in 1980, she realized that Nickerson's story was not made-up after all.

She decided to have an expert authenticate the work, so she gave it to Edouard Stackpole (a Nantucket whaling authority). He concluded that the manuscript was absolutely authentic. Finch thereafter donated the manuscript to the Nantucket Historical Association.

In 1984, Thomas Nickerson's version of the whale attack was published for the first time. The Historical Association, using Nickerson's original title, published an abridged version of his 105-page work.

Not only is it valuable in its own right, Nickerson's story fills-in details which Owen Chase left out of his narrative. Taken together, the two manuscripts tell us what happened during (and after) the whale attack.

In this image, we see Nickerson's drawing of the whale "at the moment of attack." Nickerson was at the helm of the *Essex* at the time.

Click on the image for a better view.

Credits:

Nantucket Historical Association; a page from Thomas Nickerson's narrative which he entitled *The Loss of the Ship "Essex" Sunk by a Whale and the Ordeal of the Crew in Open Boats.*

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Essex-Whale-Attack-by-Thomas-Nickerson

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Essex-Whale-Attack-by-Thomas-Nickerson