Week 3 – ~1600 - Early 1800s

The Americans Join the Whale Hunt
Whaling Grounds Expand into New Oceans
Women and Whaling
Last Week – Through ~1700

Early Indigenous & Commercial Whaling

Japan Begins Whaling
The North American Arctic

Indigenous whalers in a challenging land with little vegetation

Here, what whales provided was critical
Indigenous Whalers South of Alaska
Different needs, Culture, Methods
Farther South, in Jan 1806 on the Oregon Coast,

Local natives offer to sell oil and blubber from a beached whale to visitors who are camped a few miles up the coast for the winter.
Exploiting Whales in Europe Before the Basques Begin Whaling

Celts . . .
Vikings
Greeks
Romans
1000-1100 AD, The Basques Introduce Commercial Whaling, For Profit, to the World
Mid-1500s – Across the Atlantic

Fewer whales available in European waters and increasing demand for whale products

Leads to expansion of commercial whaling to the “New World”
1611 – The First Commercial Whalers Hunt the Arctic: The English at Spitsbergen

1613

THE RUSH IS ON

By the end of the decade, dozens of ships from multiple countries are whaling the waters around Svalbard.
Arctic Whaling
Both dangerous & wasteful
But critical to the development of modern society
Today’s Class

- Earliest American Colonial Whaling; Shore Whaling
- Rise of Nantucket; Sperm Whaling Begins
- American Whalers Join the Hunt in the Atlantic and Arctic
- 1770s through mid-1780s – South Across the Equator; Whaling and the American Revolution
- After the Revolution Through ~1820
  - Expansion to New Oceans, New Ports
- Women and Whaling
1614
Captain John Smith of Jamestown fame returns to the new world to hunt whales
1620: The *Mayflower*

Only 110 feet long, about the length of a blue whale

Cramped quarters for about 130 people
1620

The Pilgrims reach New England

Stopping first at tip of Cape Cod, where they see large numbers of "great size" whales.
1620
The Pilgrims reach New England
Then on to the historic landing at Plymouth
Where again there are many whales about
Close behind the Pilgrims

New arrivals from Europe establish settlements along the coasts of New England and offshore islands.
Beached or stranded whales are common. Previously exploited by the natives, now the settlers learn their value.
The First to Begin Active Hunting
Two small villages at the east end of Long Island
Colonists Learn From and Employ Natives as Members of Whaling Crews

Formal Indenture for New England native member of a whaling crew
For the Next Several Decades

The Colonists Follow the Basque Shore Whaling Model

Lookout towers along the shore with a waiting whaling crew ready to heed the call
For the Next Several Decades
The Colonists Follow the Basque Shore Whaling Model

When the call of a whale in sight comes, boats manned by 5-6 men set out at once to make the kill
For the Next Several Decades
The Colonists Follow the Basque Shore Whaling Model

The dead whale is hauled ashore, where flensing takes place.
For the Next Several Decades
The Colonists Follow the Basque Shore Whaling Model

The last step, the blubber is cooked to release the oil
By 1670

Multiple locations are actively engaged in shore whaling.
By 1670

But the settlers of an offshore island are just awakening to the possibilities.
Early 1700s

Some whalers extend the hunt farther out to sea, using ships rather than rowboats from shore.
Christopher Hussey of Nantucket is the first to take a sperm whale at sea in 1712 – Or So the Story Goes.
High quality of oil and spermaceti from sperm whales motivates the hunt.
But the hunt for right whales and bowheads continues
Oil and baleen for general use
And oil to light the streets of growing cities
1730s

The Dutch and British hunt in the Arctic, now joined by New England colonists.
Mid-1700s

Taking whales in the open oceans in warmer climes motivates American whalers to install tryworks on ships Which leads to using larger ships
Commercial Whaling Expands Across the Oceans
Waters Being Hunted by 1760
By early 1770s
Whalers are “crossing the line”

The Objective:
Sperm Whales
The French and British establish footholds in the Falkland Islands
By 1775
Whalers are hunting in the Falklands

Adding a new target to the hunt
The Southern Elephant Seal
Commercial Whaling Expands Across the Oceans
Waters Being Hunted by 1776
1773 – The Boston Tea Party

Tea thrown into the harbor includes casks delivered by two New England whaling ships.
The American Revolution
A Disaster for the American Whaling Industry
1789 – Around Cape Horn into the Pacific

A difficult, dangerous voyage
In search of new grounds for sperm whales
Commercial Whaling Expands Across the Oceans
Waters Being Hunted by 1800
1812-15
War with Britain once again devastates the American whaling industry
Commercial Whaling Expands Across the Oceans Waters Being Hunted by 1820
1800s
Women and Whaling
Husbands, fathers, sons, brothers . . .
go whaling

Many for years at a time

And some never return
Short Courtships Followed by Quick Marriages and Long Separations
Whaling Wives at home
Many become independent and active participants in local economies
Whaling Wives at Sea

Some wives who refuse to be left behind accompany their husbands on whaling voyages
Gamming Between Ships

This morning on waking the first thing I heard was that the Benjamin Cummings was in sight... We spoke her, Husband enquiring them to come aboard (she waved her handkerchief and I returned the salute by waving mine). In less time than I can write it the boat was alongside. She brought me a piece of fresh pork and a book to read. We had a pleasant time of it playing on the organ and talking." — Annie Rickston, captain's wife on the bark A.R. Tucker, 10 March 1872.
Whaling wife
Harriet Pierce
with her daughter
Harriet
Sailed with Captain
Pierce on Pacific
sperm whale
voyages in the
1850s
Whaling Women
An Unknown Number Sailing in Disguise
Sometimes Discovered
“George Weldon” outs herself accidentally as a result of her uncontrolled temper.
Next Week (May 2)  
~1820 - ~1865  

Glory Years of US Whaling  
New Bedford Lights the World  
The *Essex* and *Moby Dick*  
The Southern Ocean Beckons