

Scrimshaw Weekend and 5th Annual Nautical Antiques Show at N.B. Whaling Museum May 16-18



This sperm whale tooth depicting the ship Pacific of Nantucket hunting whales was engraved ca. 1825 by whaleman Edward Burdett (1805-1833), America's first master scrimshaw artist. The 26th Annual Scrimshaw Weekend convenes at the New Bedford Whaling Museum, May 16-18. (Photo courtesy New Bedford Whaling Museum)

The New Bedford Whaling Museum will host the 26th annual Scrimshaw Weekend on May 16 through the 18. This internationally renowned event is the world's only regular forum where collectors, dealers, curators, folk art and whaling history buffs share their interests in the indigenous art of whalers.

"This is one of my all-time favorite events at the Museum," said Stuart Frank, Senior Curator Emeritus for the New Bedford Whaling Museum and Scrimshaw Weekend host. "The folks who attend are so interested, so companionable, and so welcoming

of newcomers. With a big meal and lots of merriment in the middle, it sometimes seems like what an ideal family Thanksgiving is supposed to be. It is great fun and I always learn a lot.”

This year’s event will kick-off on Friday, May 16, with the 5th Annual Nautical Antiques Show. The Nautical Antiques Show features an exclusive, high quality sale of marine antiques including scrimshaw, nautical instruments and tools, whaling logbooks, ship models, photos, paintings, prints, New Bedford memorabilia and much more. The Antiques Show runs from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Jacobs Family Gallery. Admission to the show is \$5 and is free of charge for Scrimshaw Weekend attendees, Museum members, and with daily admission to the Museum.

The Friday evening keynote address begins at 8 p.m. and is devoted to highlighting the eminent scrimshaw collection of the East India Marine Society, now known as the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem. Founded in 1799, the East India Marine Society was the first organization to incorporate scrimshaw into its collections. The keynote address will be presented by James Vaccarino, a member of the Scrimshaw Forensics® team at the Whaling Museum and a volunteer at the Peabody Essex Museum and will take place in the Museum theater.

On Saturday, registration begins at 9 a.m. with the first presentation beginning at 10 a.m. featuring Judge Paul E. Vardeman “the Dean of Scrimshaw” from Kansas City, Mo. Judge Vardeman will reprise what may be the most significant breakthrough in scrimshaw research in many decades: the recent discovery of the anonymous so-called Britannia Engraver, a pioneer British whaleman-artist who served as a role model, and perhaps as a mentor, to Edward Burdett. Burdett is reputed to be the first American scrimshaw artist. Judge Vardeman’s presentation will be followed by “Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: The Facts in the Case of Edward Burdett.” This lecture will be presented by Senior Curator Emeritus for the New Bedford Whaling Museum and Scrimshaw Weekend host, Stuart

M. Frank. Frank will provide an assessment of the current status of that early American practitioner's seminal work. Then comes a dramatic change of pace with "My Life in Scrimshaw," presented by the colorful and ever engaging raconteur, Gary Tonkin, of Fremantle, Western Australia. Tonkin is widely regarded as one of the best and most accomplished scrimshaw artists working today.

Afternoon presentations begin with an illustrated survey of the vast private scrimshaw holdings of the late Thomas Mittler, presented by antiques dealer and author, Nina Hellman, of Nantucket. Hellman has been commissioned to compile a catalogue of the collection. The second afternoon presentation will feature a thematic survey entitled "Curator's Corner: Collecting around a Theme," by the very astute Andrew Jacobson of Ipswich. Jacobson's presentation will also include insightful tips for the wise – the annual "Market Report". The daytime portion of Saturday's events will conclude with a panel discussion of proposed legislation banning the sale of ivory, and the proposal to organize a scrimshaw collectors' society, association, or guild.

Saturday evening will feature a gala banquet at the First Unitarian Church located at 71 Eighth Street in New Bedford. The gala begins with a cash bar at 6 p.m. with dinner at 7:30 p.m. The evening also includes a film by Gregg Hurwitz of Los Angeles entitled "Scrimshaw Goes Hollywood," and the illustrated whimsy "More About Canes" by Frank.

Sunday's presentations begin at 10:30 a.m. with back-to-back workshops on "How to Do Pictorial Scrimshaw" by Tonkin and Ryan M. Cooper of Cape Cod. Tonkin and Cooper are two of the world's outstanding scrimshaw artists whose approach to scrimshaw is vastly different, providing interesting contrasts. Sunday's activities also include special exhibitions of scrimshaw by Tonkin and Cooper and by the Britannia Engraver and Edward Burdett as well as previews of scrimshaw that has been consigned for auction later this year

and scrimshaw submitted for exhibition by Scrimshaw Weekend participants nationwide.

Registration for the three day weekend is \$295 for Museum members and \$335 for non-members. Registration includes the Nautical Antiques Show, all sessions Friday through Sunday, and the gala banquet on Saturday evening. The Saturday dinner and evening program can be purchased separately for accompanying guests at \$75 per person. Full scholarships are available to university-level students, courtesy of Northeast Auctions. The 26th annual Scrimshaw Weekend is sponsored by Northeast Auctions of Portsmouth, N.H.; The Maine Antique Digest; Antiques and The Arts Weekly ("The Newtown Bee"); and New England Antiques Journal.

For more information or to register for the event, call 508-997-0046 ext. 100 or visit, <http://www.whalingmuseum.org/programs/scrimshaw-weekend>. Tweet the Scrimshaw Weekend with hashtag #ScrimshawWeekend.
