

Basic Detail Report



00008290

Title

Half block model of an American whaling vessel

Date

c 1850

Medium

Nylon, rope, pins, pine

Dimensions

Overall: 181 x 721 x 80 mm, 3 kg

Name

Half block model

History

Whaling played an essential part in the shipping industry throughout the 19th century. Industry and households depended on whale products for which there was no substitute. Whale oil was used for lighting and lubrication until 1860 when kerosene and petroleum started to gain popularity. The pure clean oil from sperm whales was a superior source of lighting and the finest candles were made from the whale's wax-like spermaceti. Light and flexible, baleen - the bristle-fringed plates found in the jaws of baleen whales - had many uses in objects which today would be made out of plastic. American whaling centred on the north-east coastal town of New Bedford, a booming industry in the 19th century with hundreds of ships regularly heading out to the Pacific Ocean. Australian whaling stations included the settlement at Twofold Bay, NSW which was established by entrepreneur Benjamin Boyd in 1844. In this region and in parts of North America whalers noted that pods of Killer whales regularly helped them in their hunts by herding migrating whales into bays and keeping the animals on the surface, making it easier for the hunters to kill the trapped whales. The Killer whales were often awarded the prize of the killed whales tongue and lips. Whaling was a dangerous activity and many boats were known to have been destroyed during hunts. In 1820, the ship ESSEX was lost after it was rammed by a whale in the Pacific Ocean. Only eight of its' twenty crew survived. Large whaling ships and small boats were vulnerable to defensive whales lashing their tails or pushing their bodies into the vessels.