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Contributions of Black Entrepreneurs to the US Whaling Industry, Abolition, and Other Civil Rights

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Abstract

The history of Black entrepreneurs from colonial times through most of the nineteenth century in the US whaling industry provides an excellent opportunity for insights into how free Blacks and those who freed themselves became entrepreneurs and how they influenced the abolition movement and other civil rights. These industrious people became whaling captains, ship designers and builders, investors, suppliers, outfitters, and producers of whale-based items. This research used Skip Finley's *Whaling Captains of Color: America's First Meritocracy* (2020a) as a dataset of over 50 men who became whaling captains. According to Tom Nicholas in *VC: An American History* (2020), these men should be considered entrepreneurs. By examining the history of whaling as a commercial industry and these entrepreneurs within it, the results showed that place of birth and date of first captaincy in relationship to the 13th Constitutional Amendment ending slavery (1865) made a difference as to the type of additional entrepreneurial endeavors pursued and whether they were involved in abolition and civic responsibilities. To provide a more complete picture of Black entrepreneurs born in North America who began their business prior to 1865, three significant whaling captains and seven contemporary Black entrepreneurs were chosen and brief biographies are provided.

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> "Before the turn of the 20th century, maritime industries provided the greatest opportunity for Black employment and investment in America." (Mary Malloy, 1990)

Introduction

From colonial times and into the mid-nineteenth century, commercial whaling was one of the main drivers of the US economy (Lance E. Davis, Robert Gallman, and Karen Gleiter 1997). At its height, the whaling industry contributed $10 million (in 1880 dollars) to GDP, enough to make it the fifth largest sector of the economy (Eric Jay Dolin 2007, 206). It was an international industry with the procurement of raw materials that were processed in and around the world's oceans. In voyages lasting up to four years, whalers became customers on nearly every continent as they obtained supplies and rested or replenished crew members (often locals) wherever they could find a port. Its major products, mainly whale oil and whale bone (baleen), were vital to the progress of many nations during the nineteenth century. For example, in Brazil, the world's largest producer of sugar, whale oil used for illumination allowed the slaves to process sugar cane through the evening hours. In other nations and with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, whale oil became almost essential for providing illumination for factories, developing urban areas, and supplying lubricants necessary for the new machinery.

Today, commercial whaling is not typically a topic discussed in history nor business textbooks and most of us cannot name a single person involved in whaling let alone someone who was Black. However, many of us learned about Crispus Attucks and Fredrick Douglass. The former was on leave from a Nantucket whale ship when he became the first person killed in the American Revolution and Douglass found his way to the whaling community of New Bedford via the Underground Railroad where he and his wife were sheltered and received their new names, and where he was eventually employed as a worker in a whale oil refinery before becoming the best known African American abolitionist.

The purpose of this paper is to add to our knowledge of Black entrepreneurs by bringing attention to some of them who played an important role in a once-significant industry that helped the US gain its independence from Britain and become a major force in global trade in the 1800s.

The Whaling Industry in the United States

Whaling in North America began thousands of years before Europeans arrived when the indigenous people harvested whales that were stranded on their beaches for meat as well as blubber. They were also known to use umiaks or dugout canoes to venture away from shore and either herd whales into shallow waters where they would first harpoon them and drag them to shore for harvesting or harpoon them in nearby waters where they would wait for the whale to tire before they would drag them to shore. In the 1500s European whalers (primarily French, English, Spanish, and Dutch) began hunting and processing whales around the rich whale fishery of what is now Newfoundland and Labrador. They came to this continent primarily when whales were migrating from the warmer breeding grounds in the south to the Arctic, usually between April and October. One of the species of whales, called the right whale, was a relatively slow swimmer and preferred shallower waters. This meant that they came close to the outer islands between Maine and New York providing ample opportunity to be caught and harvested. By the mid-1600s, when the Dutch and British settled next to these waters, they too began harvesting whales on the shores and imitating the indigenous tribes' methods. Eventually, the new white settlers progressed to using inshore whaling boats and relied on Native men to perform the hard labor.

Commercial whaling increased in the US when the demand for whale oil instead of meat became the primary objective. The cities and ports of New England, especially Nantucket, New Bedford, New London, and other Cape Cod ports were the primary locations of the industry. Whaling voyages leaving these ports typically ranged from a few days to a year, increasing as the availability of close-in whales decreased and as ships were improved to hunt in deeper waters. Later, when the Atlantic whale fisheries were depleted, the whalers were gone for up to four years hunting in the Bering Strait and the South Pacific. Eventually from the 1860s on, whaling was centered more on the west coast from such ports as San Diego, Monterrey, San Francisco, and Seattle, of which San Francisco became the most prominent. Most whalers also used a few ports in Hawaii, where they would re-supply and refurbish, winter over, and connect with cargo ships for transshipment to processors and markets.

By the mid-1800s the US was clearly the global leader of the whaling industry. By then "almost 75 percent of the of the 900 whaling ships worldwide were American registered" (Davis et al. 1997, 19). In Davis et al.'s intensive study they suggested this dominance was caused by a mix of factors including technological innovations, entrepreneurial skills, and the lay system of remuneration discussed below.

Nantucket Area (including Martha's Vineyard, New Guinea, and Gay Head)

The first major commercial port was Nantucket where right whales passed the islands during the migratory season. The right whale was known as the easiest whale to catch. Between the mid-1700s and the mid-1820s, Nantucket was the whaling capital of the world (Finley 2020b).

Most of the early whaling by whites in the Nantucket area used indigenous knowledge and labor because the only prestigious position in this endeavor was as a captain. When their laborers began succumbing to European diseases like measles, smallpox, and diphtheria, the whalers needed to find a replacement labor force (Dolin 2007). Young men who were strong and willing to work hard were attracted to the industry because they wanted an adventure, wanted to escape their home situation, and/or because the early profitability of whaling combined with profit sharing through the lay system (described below) offered them more money than what they could earn elsewhere. Daniel Vickers (1985, 291) reported that 75 percent of the oarsmen and steersmen on Nantucket deep sea whaling voyages were white by the mid-1780s, the rest being persons of color. Blacks, especially those with sailing experience, joined the whaling voyages and found them attractive for the same reasons as the young white men, but also because the remuneration system allowed them to be paid equal to a white man and had a career path based on merit rather than skin color. For some it provided an escape from slavery. The possibility of striking it rich in whaling was a large attraction, especially with legends like that of the *Loper.* Its voyage in 1830 was hailed by the *Nantucket Inquirer* as the greatest voyage ever made. They returned from the Pacific with 2280 barrels of sperm oil valued at $1,417,385 (2020 value) from a short 14 1/2 months at sea. Significantly this voyage was partially owned by three Black men and had an entirely Black crew except for the captain (Dolin 2008, 207; Finley 2020a, 47).

The Nantucket whaling industry continued to grow and brought unparalleled wealth to the town, making it the first center of commercial whaling in the US. By 1768 it possessed 125 whaling ships and that number multiplied until circumstances changed about 1842. A shift in the sand bar made entering the harbor difficult for these heavier ships and whale ship owners began looking for a new port to accommodate them (Finley 2020a, 162). The Dartmouth area with its deep port and timberlands was chosen and an area was laid out so as to accommodate the industry. It was incorporated in 1847 as New Bedford (Finley 2020a, 59).

New Bedford Area (including Dartmouth and Westport)

With its deeper port and easier access to the ocean, New Bedford could easily accommodate the larger ships and a greater number of them. By incorporation, whaling ships were hunting primarily sperm whales wherever in the world they could find them. Their ships' size and sturdiness needed to withstand rough seas and voyages that could last up to 4 years. It also needed to be a processor at sea, allowing the whale to be butchered and harvested aboard. Most often at least two cauldrons (called trypots) and their brick wood fireplaces needed to be situated on board and the holds were built to store the cargo of oil and other whale products that were usually kept in large wooden barrels.

Whale owners, crewmen, and subsidiary enterprises soon flocked to this new city and New Bedford became known as the "City that Lit the World". In 1853 the *New York Times* confidently asserted that New Bedford was probably the wealthiest place in America (Nicholas 2020, 29). By 1855, 7.5 percent of its population was Black, which was higher than that of New York and Philadelphia, and 30 percent of them had been born in the South (US National Park Service 2022). Part of this growth was because there was also a high percentage of Quakers who were abolitionists and whale ship owners. New Bedford was also known for being a prominent stop on the Underground Railway. An enslaved person could escape to sea and be gone for a long period of time; some chose to make a life in ports of call instead of returning home.

A decline in New Bedford's whaling prosperity began in the mid to late 1850s caused by a variety of factors: the sperm whale was getting scarce, cheaper coal oil was replacing whale oil in industrialized nations, other industries like textiles were growing more attractive, and most significantly, the first modern American oil well was drilled in 1859 in nearby Pennsylvania.

Whaling Environment

The working conditions changed dramatically for the seamen depending on the type of whale that was hunted, the size and condition of the ship, the skill of the captain and the essential crew members, the geographic location of the hunt, the technology employed, weather conditions, and number of days or years at sea. Whaling was an arduous and dangerous job even when all conditions seemed ideal. Sometimes, the whale being hunted was bigger than the actual master ship and significantly bigger than the small whaling boats used as harpooning platforms. Some whales dove when they were harpooned, some flipped their tails trying to loosen the harpoon, and in one instance, a whale actually attacked the mother ship. Once a whale was killed, it had to be butchered and its blubber removed (called "flensing") and rendered into oil. These tasks involved sharp knives and flensing tools and the use of trypots (big cauldrons) and fires; injuries were not uncommon. Processing whales was also overwhelming to the senses and its stench was often remarked upon; for example, the National Museum of American History reports it "was so strong a whale ship could be smelled over the horizon before it could be seen".

Other than the physical labor involved, the mental was perhaps more demanding. Most of the days on a whaling voyage, depending on its distance from home, were spent in getting to and from the whale fishery(ies). A crew member had to learn to live and work, day after day, in a confined space with others who may have been strangers. If they weren't a coordinated team, their lives as well as their livelihood was endangered. They had little personal or sleeping space because whaling ships were typically built for storing whale oil and other whale products and not for accommodation. A person had to be able to leave his family behind for the length of a voyage with no guaranteed contact until he returned home. Perhaps most significantly, he needed to endure times when no whales were spotted and the prospect of returning home with little or no pay for this difficult work. Most often a crew member only

worked one voyage or left the voyage at a convenient port, especially when other opportunities became available on land; however, persons of color were more likely to return to sea. For a Black whaleman, the industry also offered equality in remuneration and job opportunities that could not be found elsewhere.

Whaling Career Progression

Typically, first-time whalers were young men 14 to 18 years old who were strong and able-bodied and who took an entry level position to perform duties ranging from cabin boy to ordinary seaman. Once the ship set sail, they were rapidly trained in the terminology and operation of the ship. The expectation was that by the time the ship reached the whale fishery, each crew member had an assigned role and could be in position to execute his job correctly and timely; mistakes in this industry were often a matter of life and death. If the boy had previous sailing experience or a special skill set, such as a carpenter, he might advance depending on performance, regardless of his color. Because his future pay was based on the position he held, he might use his downtime to learn one of the skilled trades, such as a navigator, steerer, or harpooner. Sometimes literacy and relevant skills were taught by the captain, the captain's wife, or other officers during the ship's downtime. The next career level would be a position as one of the mates, but that would usually require literacy and possibly accounting skills, and as such, might be a condition of employment. These mates might be required to keep logbooks and account for inventories, for example. Typically, regardless of race, a captain followed the career path described above proving himself at each step. Captains were required to keep logbooks and often kept personal journals. On occasion a man could become a captain when the ship was at sea because the existing captain was either lost or incapacitated. Usually, the first mate was elevated to that position; however, it is unclear whether this happened automatically or was an agreement amongst the crew. What was critical was that the crew trusted the new captain to bring them home safely and profitability.

Several of the captains of color in this study first served in the role as a replacement captain. Captains who were successful had a high probability of being successful in the future (Nicholas 2020, 31). However, sometimes successful captains felt that they had enough money to stay at home and operate other less-risky businesses.

The Financial System of Remuneration

The financial system of American whaling was one of its features that set it apart from other industries. Financial earnings from a whale voyage were based on what was called the “lay” system. From the captain to the lowest crew member, each man’s earnings were based on a percentage or a “lay” of the total profits earned from the voyage. Different percentages or “lays” were established for each voyage based on a contract with the crew member. There was a hierarchy of lays with the captain receiving the greatest portion, somewhere around 5-12.5 percent (David Moment 1957, 274). The next group included those considered essential to the voyage, the first mate, second mate, and a third mate who received lower percentages than the captain but more than the cook, the cooper, and other skilled tradesmen (Nicholas 2020, 32-33). Next came harpooners and boat steerers who were likely to receive maybe 1 percent, and common seamen were usually paid lower than that. From their earnings, expenses incurred on board such as new clothing, tobacco, and tools were deducted. What this meant for the whaling crew member of color was that his pay was based on the job he performed and agreed to rather than the color of his skin.

According to Finley (2020a, 232-233), the top 25 whaling captains of color who began their captaincy between 1784 and 1926, earned a total of $68,731,763 (2019 US currency, 93.1 percent of the 50 listed) with William T. Shorey (1859-1919) of San Francisco earning

$7,784,721. Shorey's success was significantly related to his 1) having San Francisco as his home port that allowed for shorter duration per voyage and 2) catching whales with a higher product value (baleen rather than oil).

Return on Investment

It was the return on investment and the wealth it generated that made whaling so attractive and built the mansions in Nantucket, New Bedford, and other whaling cities of the northeast. Most whaleship owners, according to Tom Nicholas (2020, 29) invested earnings from earlier voyages into future voyages "perpetuating a cycle of wealth accumulation". They also diversified into other areas, especially locally, making the total effect on the local economy substantial.

To determine how the return on investment for whaling related to other opportunities during this time, Barbara Coffey (2021a) analyzed 11,257 whaling voyages on 1,982 ships during the 1800s. The mean return of investment for those voyages was 4.7 percent with a maximum return of 237.1 percent and for voyages in the last half of the century, the mean was 5.9 percent with a maximum of 4,773.6 percent while government bonds returned only 4.6 percent. The returns from 1850-1899 were primarily from those ships sailing out of San Francisco, like Shorey mentioned above (Coffey 2021b). Because the data for whaling profits were based on what the whaling ships brought back to port, she estimated that the actual returns were probably higher because whaling products were often shipped from the West Coast to New England via cargo ships or by rail after the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869. Surprisingly, she reports that returns actually increased after the discovery of petroleum in 1859 in Pennsylvania. This was because while both the demand and supply of whale oil declined, the whalebone (baleen) harvest became more important and was more valuable. She reports that by 1899, whalebone accounted for 81.7 percent of whaling returns. Baleen's use as the "plastic" of the 1800s and early 1900s for such things as parasol ribs, whips, collar stays, carriage springs, hoop skirts, and ladies' underwear drove the market until it was replaced by metallic components in the early 1900s.

Demographics

Between the Revolutionary and the American Civil War, more than 100,000 Americans went to sea; 18 percent were men of color and most of them were free and a small group were enslaved people who considered the whaling ship the last stop of the Underground Railway.

As Blacks moved into the Martha's Vineyard area, they began to intermarry with the Native American population. In 1820 Native Americans constituted about 12 percent of Nantucket whalemen and mixed genetics of Blacks and native tribes accounted for about 25 percent (Shoemaker 2015, 171). The complex ethnic background of many whalers of color is illustrated by Finley (2020a, 41) when he reports that Captain Joseph G. Belain's maternal grandfather was 3/4 Native American, 1/8 negro, 1/8 white and his maternal grandmother was 1/2 Native American, 1/4 negro, and 1/4 white.

Methodology and Analysis

Following Nicholas's illustration (2020, 22) that equates entrepreneurs in a venture capital structure to that of a captain in the structure of the whaling industry, this study analyzed Finley's list and descriptions of over 50 entrepreneurs included in his *Whaling Captains of Color* (2020a). From Finley's list, all unconfirmed whaling captains of color were removed, and those remaining were separated by geographic origin of birth. Twenty-two of the captains were born in North America and are listed in Table 1. The rest were primarily born in Cape Verde under Portuguese rule and were confirmed by Finley to be of mixed African ancestry;

these are shown in Table 2. Table 3 lists the four whaling captains born in the Caribbean Islands and the one who was born in New Guinea. All of the men listed in Tables 3 and 4 held their first captaincy after the ratification of the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery in 1865, except the two shown in bold. One captain in Table 1, also shown in bold, held his first captaincy after ratification. Over half of Finley's captains had additional business ventures, especially the Cape Verdeans who turned to the packet shipping business when the whaling industry declined.

From Table 1 three well-documented captains from before ratification were chosen for further analysis and discussion. To provide further insight into the times and activities of Black entrepreneurs, seven contemporary people in businesses related to the whaling industry or business owners in the whaling communities were selected. These ten people are summarized in Table 4 and described in more detail under "Some Notable Black Entrepreneurs".

Findings

This analysis provided some interesting insights into the environmental and political context as well as the working conditions of the whaling industry and the Black entrepreneurs listed in Finley's 2020a work. Tables 2-4 provide a summary to date. General observations showed that the captains could be categorized by their place of birth, year of first captaincy (before or after 1865), number of years in the industry, involvement in other enterprises, participation in the abolition movement, civil rights movement, and community involvement.

Place of Birth

This indicator was used as a surrogate for genetic makeup and revealed other interesting information. The group was divided into three ethnic groups depending on place of birth: 1) those born in North America, 2) those born in the Cape Verde or the Azores, and 3) those born in the Caribbean or Pacific Islands. In all cases, Finley (2020a, 218) verified their status as a person of color according to his criteria and listed several not included in this paper as unconfirmed, but potential.

North Americans. These captains were assumed by Finley to be a mixture of African American with either Caucasian or Native American genes or a combination of all three. In this part of North America, the non-Black and non-Native cultural and legal influences were mostly British, and then French and Dutch. One might also assume that of the African Americans from New Bedford, about 30 percent of them were born in the South (U.S. NPS 2022). Analyses of their biographies show some captains, like those in the Cuffe and Wainer families, were born into the whaling profession, and many others engaged in whaling as a part time trade, especially when typical voyages were less than a year. Most invested their whaling profits into other non-related entrepreneurial endeavors, like Absalom Boston, discussed later.

Of the 22 men who were from North America (Table 1), four of them became captains after the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution in 1865 prohibiting slavery. One focus of this inquiry was to examine the contributions of Black whaling captains to abolition and civil rights; however, most of them in this sample of 50 became captains after 1865, so no statistically valid information was provided. Biographical information for three of the North American captains based primarily in the New England ports is provided later to show how these men contributed to their communities through civic, charitable, and social activities.

Portuguese-Africans. Almost half of the entrepreneurs in this study were born in Cape Verde or the Azores (Table 2). If they were designated as "colored", "mulatto", or have other such designations in official documents, they are assumed by the author to be of Portuguese-African descent. The islands of Macaronesia were often used by whaling, merchant, and slave ships traveling between the old world and the new. These entrepreneurs were likely controlled

Table 1
Black Whaling Captains* from Colonial America and the USA

Name	Year Became Captain	Years in Industry /Home	Value of Whales Killed (2019 USD)	Rank By Value	Abolitionist Civil Rights	Other Enterprises
Belain, Joseph G.	**1889**	30+	$911,850	24		
Boston, Absalom F.	1822				Yes	See Table 4
Cook, Pardon [pc]	1839	20+	$2,487,077	14		Part owner
Cuffe Sr., Paul [pc]	1784				Yes	See Table 4
Cuffe, William [pc]	1837					
Green, Peter	1821	4+			free	
Harris, Samuel W.	1842	18	$1,202,468	20		Owner, Farm
Haskins, Amos	1849		$2,824,266	10		
Haskins, William	1859		$1,571,792	18		
Jeffers Jr., Amos	1847*	11				
Lee, Ferdinand	1864		$933,002	23		
Lee, William G.	**1880**	42				
Lewis, Henry A.	1833	25	$7,043,367	2		
Martin, William A.	**1878**		$973,424	22		
Maste(i)n, John [pc]	1812					
Phelps, Alvan [pc]	1805					
Pompey, Edward J.	1836				Yes	See Table 4
Roderick, Joseph	**1909**	61				
Wainer, Jeremiah [pc]	1805					
Wainer, Michael [pc]	1792					
Wainer, Thomas [pc]	1803					
Wainer, Paul [pc]	1810					

Notes: **bold** indicates captains in the list who held first captain position after 13th Amendment to US Constitution prohibiting slavery; * died before serving as captain; [pc] related to Paul Cuffe Sr.
Source: Finley (2020a, 217-218) and others

Table 2
Black Whaling Captains from Cape Verde/Azores

Name	Year became Captain	Years in Industry	Value of Whales Killed (2019 USD)	Rank by Value	Other Enterprises
Benton, Anthony P.	1878	23	$2,672,487	11	Owned packet ship(s)
Benton, Joseph P.	1891	20	$1,881,448	16	
Costa, Benjamin	1921				Owned packet ship(s)
Costa, Carlo	1880		$3,505,623	6	
da Lomba, João	1920	30			Owned packet ship(s)
Costa, Maecelino DeBarro*	1881		$2,186,744	15	
Domingues José M.	1919	24			Owned packet ship(s)
Domingues, Manuel J.	1920	2			Cook for Gulf Oil-40 years
Ears, Jasper	1870	31	$1,172,594	21	
Fernandez, Julio	1909				
Freitas, Theophilus M.	1908	22	$2,979,535	9	
Gaspar, Joseph	1902				Owned packet ship(s)
Gomes, August P	1919	21			
Gonzalas, Henry J.	1926				
Gonsalves, John T.	1890	21+	$4,374,779	5	Owned property
Lewis, Joseph R.**	1907	31	$2,507,350	13	
Lopez, Peter	1914	21			Fur trapper/hunter
d'Oliveira, Luiz	1917				Owned packet ship(s)
Perry, José	1908		$897,000		
Pierce, Servino	**1858**	26+	$4,606,933	3	
Rosa, Valentine	1905	13+	$4,526,659	4	Owned packet ship(s)
Senna, Antonio José	1891		$827,962	25	Owned packet ship(s)
Senna, Ayres J.	1891		$1,624,336	17	Owned packet ship(s) and whalers
Senna, Joseph H	1906	21	$3,019,983	8	Owned packet ship(s)
Silva, John Z.	1878	36			Owned packet ship(s)
Sylvia, Antone NB	1879	5			Clothing/outfitting shop, whaling agent, owned whalers

Notes: * Assumed Cape Verdean; ** Azores; **bold** indicates only captain in the list who held position before 13th Amendment to US Constitution prohibiting slavery in 1865.
Source: Finley (2020a, 217-218) and others

Table 3
Black Whaling Captains from Other Non-USA and Non-Portuguese Controlled Birthplaces

Name	Year became Captain	Years in Industry	Value of Whales Killed (2019 USD)	Rank by Value	Other Enterprises
Hussey, Frederick**	**1854**		$1,213,887	19	
Lopes, Frank M. *	1917				
Lopes, Louis M.*	1902	28	$2,553,844	12	Owned packet ship(s)
Shorey, William T.*	1885	20+	$7,784,721	1	
Stevenson, Collins A.*	1889	21	$3,345,633	7	

Notes: * Caribbean, ** Pacific Islander; bold indicates only captain in the list who held position before 13th Amendment to US Constitution prohibiting slavery.
Source: Finley (2020a, 217-218) and others

and influenced by both Portuguese and Spanish cultures and slave traditions. From these islands, a good number of young men succumbed to recruiters looking for new crew members. When the conditions in Cape Verde were disease-ridden and drought prone, they found joining a ship to be better than living where they were born. Most became whaling captains in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Their non-whaling entrepreneurial efforts were typically in the packet shipping business, which 42 percent of the men also owned and operated. Much of their whaling experience was based out of San Francisco after the discovery of petroleum. They turned their efforts away from the sperm whale with a high blubber composition to those whales that produced other products, like baleen, which took them to Alaskan waters.

Caribbean or Pacific Island born. The genetic background of the five captains in this category are assumed to be a mixture of African Americans brought to the Caribbean during the slave trade and their European slave owners or their employees. There may have been some Caribe ancestry also, but that is less likely. The captain from New Guinea may have no African blood in his ancestry but is likely to be considered “colored”, born of indigenous parents.

Dates of Involvement in Industry/Geographic Location(s) of Enterprise

In general, those from Nantucket and New Bedford were early entrants into the US whaling industry, while those from elsewhere were involved after what was considered the peak of the industry. The Cape Verdeans were more likely to be involved with Pacific whaling, especially in the Arctic and, therefore, be more likely to use the port of San Francisco and those in Hawaii.

Categorizing these entrepreneurs by place of birth also illustrated that the dates of first captaincy were generally before the 13th Amendment for those from North America, and after for the rest. The captains from outside of North America (Cape Verde) were more likely to stay in the industry longer, earn more money, and be less involved in civil rights issues. Also, when the financial attractiveness of whaling diminished because of scarcity and declining markets, they were more likely to invest in packet shipping rather than an enterprise on land. Those from North America seemed to become more involved with land-based enterprises. The North American results might be somewhat skewed as about 40 percent of the captains are members of the Paul Cuffe family dynasty.

Participation in Anti-Slavery/Civil Rights/Philanthropy

It appears that a person was more likely to participate in these movements if one operated a land-based enterprise instead of one that was at sea. It might also be the fact that Nantucket

and New Bedford had a significant population of Quakers who set the ethos of the community for activism. According to Patrick Rael (2008, vii), “current scholarly consensus now clearly holds that African American activists were every bit [as] central to the north abolitionist crusades as were its William Lloyd Garrisons and John Browns”. He also suggests it was the Blacks with means and motives in the north to challenge the existing systems who made a difference.

Some Notable Black Entrepreneurs

The whaling industry was more than hunting and harvesting whales and the end products were more than oil for lighting. It also involved the entrepreneurs who provided goods necessary for conducting the hunt (such as: whaling ship builders, boat makers, sails makers, riggers, blacksmiths, coopers, and provisioners) and those who provided services (such as: dock owners, lawyers, bondsmen, whaling agents, investors, bankers, and insurers). Once the whaling ship returned, the goods were sold to such processors as candlemakers, tryers (refiners), perfumers, clothing manufacturers, and lubricant makers. Some entrepreneurs even provided boarding rooms, restaurants, and stores for the whalemen who waited in the towns until their next voyage.

The following 10 notable Black entrepreneurs born 50 years or more before emancipation were chosen for further examination, especially with regard to the nature of their enterprise(s) and any actions that took with regard to abolition, other civil rights, and community responsibilities. Three of these (Absalom Boston, Paul Cuffe, Sr., and Edward Pompey) were entrepreneurs in other endeavors besides being whaling captains and the other seven were contemporaries who owned businesses related to the industry or lived in the same whaling communities. A summary of these people, their enterprise(s), and their contributions to abolition and civil rights are shown in Table 4. Paul Cuffe, Sr., a whaling captain and head of a family entrepreneurial dynasty, is often mentioned in various lists of “Black entrepreneurs or inventors you should know” as is James Forten and Lewis Temple.

Absalom Boston (1785-1855) and Family

Absalom Boston was a third-generation Nantucket Islander. He was born free in 1785 in the house owned by his African American father, Seneca Boston (an ex-slave), and his mother Thankful Micah, a Wampanoag Indian. Seneca was a weaver from a whaling family of which his brother, Prince Boston, Jr., became the subject in a landmark dispute over slave wages earned while working on a whaling ship (Finley 2020a, 47-48).

Prince Boston had been hired out by his slave owner, William Swain, to work on the whaler *Friendship* owned by prominent Quaker abolitionist William Rotch. Hiring out enslaved people to work on whalers was a common practice for Swain and other slave owners at the time and typically, the slave owners received their slaves’ wages. On this particular voyage, Prince proved so exceptionally valuable as a harpooner that his captain, Elisha Folger paid him directly. Swain died while the voyage was at sea, so his relatives sued Folger demanding the wages. The decision of the Nantucket Court of Appeals was that Boston should not only be awarded the wages he earned, but also be freed in five years. When the Swain family appealed the case to the colonial Supreme Court of Massachusetts, Rotch let it be known that he would hire John Adams to represent Prince Boston and Folger and the appeal was never made (Dolin 2007, 123). Prince then sued for his immediate freedom. “The ramifications of this case in 1773 were extraordinary, first because it ended the slave owners’ practice of shipping slaves out on dangerous whaling voyages, but it also heralded the end of slavery on Nantucket. In 1783, the [new] state of Massachusetts applied this ruling to the entire state. Prince Boston became the first slave to sue for his freedom (and win)” (Finley 2020a, 48).

Table 4

Some Notable Black Entrepreneurs Associated with the Whaling Industry

Name/Dates	Location	Enterprises	Abolition	Other Civil Rights
Panel A: Whaling captains involved in other enterprises				
Boston, Absalom 1785-1855	Nantucket, MA New Guinea	Whale ships, store, inn, and other properties	Supporter of the *Liberator*	Founding member of African Meeting House/Community Center with church and school; petitioner to repeal laws based on color; petitioner for equality in Common School Law; sued for daughter's admission to Nantucket Public HS
Cuffe Sr., Paul 1759-1817	Nantucket, Westport, MA	Boat/ship builder, maritime trader, whale ship owner, outfitting store	Firm believer in Quaker views; internationally recognized abolitionist; sent successful Black families to Sierra Leone to assist with freed slave development	Funded smallpox hospital; built an integrated, co-ed school on property; funded Friends meeting house
Pompey, Edward J. 1800-1848	Nantucket, MA New Guinea	Owner whaling store; lender	Sold *Liberator* in store and other William Lloyd Garrison publications; attended New England Anti-Slavery convention	President of Nantucket Colored Temperate Society; petitioner to repeal laws based on color; petitioner for equality in Common School Law
Note: Table 3 lists fifteen other whaling captains mostly Cape Verdeans who engaged in other enterprises, primarily owning and operating packet ships.				
Panel B: Entrepreneurs without whaling captaincy experience				
DeSant, Antoine 1815-1886	New London, CT	Grocer, Property Owner, Barber	none found	none found
Forten, James 1766-1842	Philadelphia, PA	Sailmaker, property owner, lender	Funded *Liberator* and contributed essays; known as ardent abolitionist whose views were sought by others; notable Black and white abolitionists guests in home	Founded a Black school; lent money to the needy
Johnson, Mary "Polly" 1784-1871	New Bedford, MA	Confectioner	Underground Railway stop; helped Douglass family and others; practiced free labor products; regularly attended anti-slavery meetings	Active in women's rights and other social reforms
Johnson, Nathan 1797-1880	New Bedford, MA	Caterer	Underground Railway stop; helped Douglass family and others; VP of MA Anti-Slavery Society; representative to annual conventions	
Johnson, Richard 1776-1853	New Bedford, MA	Ship Owner; merchant buying and selling	Agent for *Liberator* in store	Treasurer of New Bedford Union Society
Mashow, John 1805-1893	Padanaram, New Bedford, MA	Ship Designer and Builder; ship owner	none found	none found
Temple, Lewis 800-1854	New Bedford, MA	Blacksmith and Ship smith; ship hardware store	Generally known to be	Vice President of New Bedford Union Society

Prince's nephew, Absalom Boston decided to continue the family tradition and became a whaler at the age of 15. His whaling career followed the traditional path through the ranks on various voyages until he became captain of the *Industry* in 1822 at the age of 37. He also became part owner in whaling ships; most notably was the extremely successful voyage of the *Loper* in 1829-30, which is believed to have made him rich enough to leave whaling and participate in business ventures on land. Finley (2020a, 47) estimated his share of this one voyage to be $67,869 in 2020 currency. Over the years, his whaling income helped him own several real estate properties, a store, and an inn in the Nantucket area, probably in New Guinea.

Besides his whaling activities, Absalom Boston was an ardent abolitionist and defender of civil rights for Blacks in Nantucket and Massachusetts. He was a founding member of the African Meeting House in New Guinea built in 1824 to be used as a community center where church services and school sessions could be held and where the community could congregate (Nantucket Historical Association (NHA), Black Activism). Working with Edward Pompey (described below) and other prominent Blacks of Nantucket, Absalom had a role in a series of significant petitions to the Massachusetts Legislature. He was lead petitioner on the first one sent in 1839 calling on "the immediate repeal of all laws in this state which make any distinction among its inhabitants on account of color" (ibid.). In 1845, the Massachusetts Legislature passed House Bill 45 granting all children equal access to education due in part to a petition submitted the previous year by his friend Edward Pompey (described below) and 100 others. Boston then sued the city of Nantucket to allow his daughter to attend the Nantucket public high school. However, it took until 1847 and a change in school board members for Blacks to be admitted (NHA, Social Activism). When Absalom Boston died in 1848, his family was considered one of the most influential Black families on Nantucket.

Paul Cuffe (1759-1817) and Family Dynasty

On January 17, 1759 Paul Cuffe, the head of a Black whaling and shipping dynasty that was a significant New England firm in the late 1700s to mid-1800s, was born on Cuttyhunk Island, Massachusetts, about 12 miles south of Dartmouth by boat and 8 miles west of Martha's Vineyard. His father, Cuff (or Kofi) Slocum, was an emancipated slave from Ghana and his mother, Ruth Moses, was a Wampanoag woman from Harwich on Cape Cod (Finley 2020a, 10; Paul Cuffe website). (For the descendants of this union, see Figure 1.) Under Massachusetts law Paul and his nine brothers and sisters were considered free, but were ineligible for tribal benefits (Finley 2020a, 12). The family lived on the Cuttyhunk property his father managed for about 15 years for the Slocums, a Quaker family of Dartmouth, until he purchased an existing 116-acre farm in Dartmouth for the new family home in 1767. When Cuff died in 1772, he left the relatively barren farm to his two youngest sons, John, age 15 and Paul, age 13. Eight years later they petitioned the Massachusetts colonial legislature for relief from taxes because they didn't have the right to vote. The petition was denied, but by this and subsequent legal actions, the court of the new State of Massachusetts ruled in 1783 that all males who owned property regardless of race, were entitled to vote (US National Park Service 2022).

Just one year after his father's death, in 1773 Paul decided to become a crew member on whaling ships, especially those belonging to the prominent William Rotch family who were Quakers and abolitionists (Finley 2020a, 13). It was on these early voyages that he taught himself to read and write and learned the navigation skills that became the foundation of his business. With the advent of the American Revolution and the British Navy patrolling the New England waters, he was captured during a voyage in 1776 and jailed for three months in the New York Harbor (Paul Cuffe website). Upon his release, he was determined to help get supplies and food to the people in Nantucket and the other coastal islands and became a

successful blockade runner challenging the British on moonless nights using small boats in waters with which he was familiar. “In the process, [Paul] built up relationships with leading families of Nantucket Quakers, such as William Rotch, Sr. and Jr., who became important friends and business partners throughout his life” (Paul Cuffe website).

The year 1783 proved to be a significant one for Paul. He married a widowed daughter of a prominent Wampanoag family from Martha’s Vineyard, Alice Abel Pequit, and established a shipping business with Michael Wainer, a brother-in-law married to his older sister Mary. Alice and Paul had seven children; their two sons served as crewmembers when they were older. Their shipping business started by carrying merchandise between ports from Cape Cod south to Rhode Island, and to New London, Connecticut. Like good Quakers, even though they could not be members, they re-invested their profits into the business. By 1789, Paul and his brother-in-law Michael bought waterfront property in Westport and built a wharf and a shipyard. Their intent was to expand their business by diversifying into whaling and commercial fishing and expanding their markets. They wanted to trade from the Canadian Maritimes to the West Indies, capture fish on the Grand Banks, and hunt whales across the Atlantic. These aspirations required larger ships and the new partnership was up to the task.

As their families grew, many of their offspring participated in the business or married men who were merchants, whaling captains, and/or shipbuilders. Both Paul and Michael were whaling captains as were two of Michael’s sons, one of his sons-in law, and two of Paul’s sons-in-law. These men are listed in Table 1 with a ^{PC} after their name. Five other sons worked on whalers, three were Michael’s sons, one who served as a first mate, and two as crew members and two of Paul’s who served as crew members. Three of Paul Cuffe’s sons-in-law were also his business partners, primarily on the merchandising side. Two of them were brothers, Peter and Alexander Howard, who married daughters, Naomi and Ruth, respectively; after Alexander died, Ruth married Nathan Johnson, a seafaring merchant who became a business partner (described below).

Paul Cuffe’s business ventures helped him become one of the wealthiest persons of color in the United States, but it was his abolitionist activities that made him known around the world. David Brion Davis (2014, 170) suggested that his Quaker connections and transatlantic travel seeking the abolition of slavery, made him the best known African American of his time. By 1808, Paul Cuffe was accepted as a member of the Quaker Meeting House in Westport, even though he had practiced their beliefs most of his working life. This acceptance helped pave the way for Cuffe to discuss his views with both white and Black businessmen and abolitionist leaders in such cities as Baltimore, Philadelphia (James Forten, specifically; discussed later), New York, Liverpool, and London. He held a strong view that a group of skilled and successful Blacks from the United States should return to Sierra Leone as a model of what Blacks could accomplish such that colonists would choose to develop the indigenous population rather than treat them as a commodity. In 1811, prompted by both American and British abolitionists, he paid a personal visit to the British Crown colony of Sierra Leone to assess the conditions in freed slave communities. Upon his return to Britain with his report, he was warmly received by the Quakers and the leaders of The African Institution, but he was not comfortable because he was not convinced that their motives and views were compatible with his (Paul Cuffe website). However, he decided to make Liverpool his base of operations for his European/African business and made several trips between Sierra Leone, London, Liverpool, and Westport (Massachusetts). On one such trip in 1812, when he was returning to the United States with cargo from British Sierra Leone, the customs officials in Newport seized his ship and his goods. Cuffe decided to take a coach to Washington and appeal the matter. There he met with President James Madison and the Secretaries of State and Treasury, who issued orders that his ship be released. This event is considered the first time a Black man was received by a sitting President in the White House (Paul Cuffe website; Sheldon Harris

1972, 58). After the war, Cuffe made a final trip to Sierra Leone transporting ten families consisting of 38 people in total who would help the local people become more productive.

Paul Cuffe was also a man who contributed part of his wealth to the community of Westport. He was known to contribute his time and half of the costs to a new Quaker meeting house, he helped fund a smallpox hospital, and built an integrated co-educational school on his property, perhaps the first school of its type in America (Paul Cuffe website).

Antoine (Antone) DeSant (1815-1886, also known as Antonio De Santo)

DeSant was born in Cape Verde in 1815 under Portuguese rule. Because of drought, illnesses, and lack of job opportunities on the islands, he joined one of many whaling vessels headed for the United States that had stopped in the islands to resupply its ship and recruit new crew members. He was about 16 when he arrived in New London, Connecticut in 1830 at the beginning of the whaling boom. He was one of several thousand men who worked more than 80 vessels considering New London their home port; ten percent of these men were colored (Laura Natusch 2021). Ten years after his arrival, through his work on whaling voyages and perhaps some merchant trips, he was able to purchase two houses in New London. In 1860, he opened a grocery store and a barber shop on the same street as his residence and purchased other houses as he profited from his businesses.

He is reported to have taken at least a dozen whaling voyages plus other commercial shipping expeditions including serving as an officer on the *Portland,* a cargo ship in 1850 headed to San Francisco that was likely to be delivering passengers and supplies for the gold rush, which was common that year. His personal logbook from this voyage showed that he was literate (Patricia C. McKissack and Frederick L. McKissack 1999, 62).

De Sant married twice. In 1842 he married Diana Maria Gager (Cager) and had four children; in 1856 as a widower, he married Susan Congdon and had eleven children, of whom all but four died before reaching adulthood. He became a naturalized US citizen in 1872 and there is no mention of abolition or other civic activities. The family houses on Bank Street in New London were sold in 1991 by his great-granddaughter.

James Forten (1766-1842)

Of all of the entrepreneurs in this study, James Forten is the subject of more articles and books than any other. He was a successful businessman, inventor, designer, money lender, property owner, philanthropist, prohibitionist, essayist, and a wealthy family man respected by both Blacks and whites in the city of Philadelphia, perhaps the most significant port during his lifetime. He was born as a third-generation free man to Thomas and Margaret Forten in 1766 in Philadelphia and had an older sister, Abigail. Thomas was a skilled and valued sailmaker in the Robert Bridges' sail loft in Philadelphia, but died when James was only seven. As a child, James worked various odd jobs, such as chimney sweep, store clerk, and possibly as a helper for Mr. Bridges in the loft. His mother insisted his work did not interfere with his education at the African school founded by Anthony Benezet, a Quaker abolitionist. When James was ten, he heard the first reading of the Declaration of Independence and was impressed by the concept of equality for all (Julie Winch 2002a, 77). Four years later he decided to help fight against the British in the Revolutionary War by joining privateer Stephen Decatur, Sr. as a member of his crew. Unfortunately, the ship was captured by the Royal Navy and James wound up being put in jail on the *HMS Jersey* in New York harbor. The captain of the ship that captured James was so impressed by the young man that he made sure that he did not receive different treatment than that which was afforded to white men. Seven months later he was paroled on the condition that he would no longer fight the British. James decided he would become a merchant mariner and one of his first voyages was to London where he stayed and worked in the sail lofts along the Thames for a year.

Upon his return to Philadelphia, he was 19 and apprenticed himself to Robert Bridges as a sail-maker. Because of his skill and his work ethic, Bridges looked at him as the future of his business. He had hated the fact that he had been forced to take over the family business and had spent 20 years there that he did not enjoy. Therefore, he made sure that his children and the spouses of his daughters were educated in a “better” profession (Robert Purvis 1842, 3). After a year of James’s advanced apprenticeship, Robert appointed him foreman of the loft. At the beginning there was some unhappiness among both the Blacks and the whites at the factory and from some of the clients. James’s skill, business acumen, and management style helped him overcome these obstacles and the company prospered. It was perhaps the first time in American history that there was a successful racially integrated business run by a Black man. When Bridges retired in 1798, Forten purchased the Bridges sail-making firm.

In 1806 as a widower, Forten married Charlotte Vandine of Philadelphia and together they had four sons and five daughters. The oldest and youngest sons were educated and trained as sailmakers and continued the family business after James’s death. All of the children were educated, many through university studies, and were raised in an ardent abolitionist household that was also concerned about women's rights. It was not unusual to have the notable abolitionists of the day visiting the Forten household (Winch 2002b, 4).

Forten’s success was due in part to his apprenticeship and the backing he received from the Bridges family, but also to his innovativeness and managerial demeanor. He has been credited with developing at least two tools, one to assist in maneuvering large sails in smaller lofts during the manufacturing process and another that would help raise the sails more quickly and efficiently once they were on ship. His dealings with employees, clients, suppliers, and business partners were known for being honest and fair.

As an abolitionist he helped fund Garrison's *Liberator* and other anti-slavery newspapers and often contributed essays under his pen name “a colored man of Philadelphia”. His views were sought out and respected by many of the leading abolitionists regardless of their race and his family members continued in that tradition, including the founding of the Philadelphia Female Anti-slavery Society founded by his wife Charlotte and two of their daughters in 1833.

Mary (“Polly”) and Nathan Johnson

This New Bedford couple were successful businesspeople as well as staunch abolitionists. Nathan and Polly, along with her daughter from a previous marriage, Rhoda Durfee, began their stay in New Bedford in 1820 as domestic servants in the home of prominent whaler Charles W. Morgan. Both Polly and Rhoda’s salaries were placed in Nathan’s account. Several sources indicate that this money was used to purchase up to four properties in New Bedford and that perhaps Morgan helped them with those purchases. One of these purchases was their home at 21 Seventh Street; 23 Seventh Street became their confectionary shop, and another purchase was the Old Quaker Meeting House, next door. Their house was also known as a stop on the Underground Railroad by white abolitionists in the area.

Not only did the Johnsons help Black people passing through the community, but they also are credited with providing longer lodging for at least two families who stayed with them prior to emancipation. One of them was the man who became known as Frederick Douglass and his wife, Anna. They lived with the Johnsons beginning in September of 1838 and left in 1839 when Douglass obtained a job and lived elsewhere for five years in New Bedford. Nathan has been credited with helping Frederick Douglass choose his new name.

Personal Biography of “Polly” Johnson (1784-1871)

Polly was born in Fall River, Massachusetts, as a free Black and became known as an excellent confectioner as well as an active participant in the abolition movement. By 1836, the Charles W. Morgans and other wealthy families of New Bedford were regular customers, not

only for special candies, but also for confections, cakes, and molded ice cream for parties and weddings, some of which she also catered with her husband. She practiced her abolitionist beliefs by not using any sugar harvested or produced by enslaved labor as others in the international Free Produce Movement were doing at that time. When her husband went to the California gold rush in 1849, she was given his power of attorney for his affairs. In 1852 he was declared an insolvent debtor, possibly because he was overextended on the mortgages for his property, and she had to declare bankruptcy for him. To prevent the property valued at $18,700 in 1849 ($472,300 in 2020 currency) being lost, it was bought by the Rodmans, relatives of their former employers the Morgans. By 1857 Polly had earned enough money to buy them back. Polly's good business sense and hard work have been credited with the turn-around in their fortune and with the Johnsons becoming known as some of the wealthiest Black citizens of New Bedford.

Polly not only practiced her beliefs, but she also remained well informed on the social issues of the time and regularly attended antislavery meetings both in New Bedford and Boston (New Bedford Historical Society). One white abolitionist from New Bedford, Daniel Ricketson, "remembered seeing her [Polly] walking arm in arm with Mrs Maria Weston Chapman down Summer Street in Boston after an anti-slavery meeting a short time before the [American Civil] war while he was escorting the venerable Lucretia Mott" (New Bedford Historical Society 2022). This memory shows how well-respected Polly was to be so accepted by prominent white activists fighting for abolition, women's rights, and other social reforms.

Personal Biography of Nathan Johnson (~1797-1880)

> Johnson ... lived in a neater house; dined at a better table; took, paid for, and read, more newspapers; better understood the moral, religious, and political character of the nation, —than nine tenths of the slaveholders in Talbot County Maryland. (Frederick Douglass 1845, Chapter XI)

It is unclear if Nathan Johnson was born free or enslaved or whether he was born in Philadelphia or Virginia. He claimed he had purchased his freedom, but how he did that is also unclear. It is known that he married Mary J. Mingo Durfree, known as Polly (discussed above), worked for Charles Morgan, purchased property, and became a caterer. Some sources suggest he also participated in other businesses. What seems to be clearly known is his extensive participation in the anti-slavery movement, especially between the years of 1832-1847. Highlights of his abolitionist experience, besides being a stationmaster for the Underground Railroad, include: 1) Representing Massachusetts from 1832-1835 to the annual American Society of Free Persons of Colour, 2) becoming Vice-President of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery (one of five) in 1840, and 3) becoming president of the National Convention of Colored People in 1847 (US National Park Service 2021). Much of his recorded abolition efforts ended in 1849 when he left for the California Gold Rush and did not return until after Polly died in 1871. Nathan did not appear to have a steady income during his time in the West; this could be why her will included a "maintenance" from her estate until his death if he returned to New Bedford within two years.

Richard Johnson (1776-1853)

Unrelated to the Johnson family discussed above, Richard Johnson was born either in Pennsylvania or Virginia in 1776. He spent most of his working life at sea in the merchant trade, and often on voyages to act as a supercargo (a person who represented the owner in selling and buying the ship's cargo) at various ports (Finley 2020a, 167; Martha S. Putney 1982, 469). By 1806, Richard Johnson was living on South Water Street in New Bedford and

was considered the most prosperous man of color in town until midcentury when Nathan Johnson became the most prosperous.

As a trader/supercargo, Richard sometimes acted on behalf of Paul Cuffe buying West Indian goods to be sold in the Cuff & Howard's store in New Bedford (Paul Cuffe website). Like Cuffe, he was caught at sea and confined by the British during the War of 1812. In 1815 he married Ruth Cuffe Howard, the daughter of Paul Cuffe and the wife of Alexander Howard, Jr., who was Johnson's deceased business partner, Alexander and his brother, Peter Howard, operated a retail shop/chandlery, called "P.&A.", Peter Howard was also a son-in-law of Paul Cuffe. When Johnson married Ruth, the store's name was changed to Howard & Johnson (Finley 2020a, 167). Johnson sold a variety of merchandise in his store including groceries and men's and women's clothes. At one point in his career, he outfitted whaling ships including the on-ship stores for sales to crew members during the voyages.

It appears that Richard Johnson may have invested his profits from the store and other activities in real estate and became the primary owner of at least five whaling ships between the years of 1822 and 1842 (Finley 2020a, 167). One of the ships he owned was the *Rising States,* a brig that was used for whaling. It was a small whaler and was first registered in Boston and then reregistered in New Bedford on November 5, 1836. For its first voyage under the new ownership, an all-Black crew was assembled with Edward Pompey (described later) as master. Johnson spent $4000 on supplies and equipment to provision the ship for a whaling voyage (Finley 2020, 52). Unfortunately, upon return the oil sold for only $2500 and so it was considered a loss. To help Johnson out, nine Black men purchased part ownership in the brig; one of them was Pompey who probably got his share in lieu of wages for the unsuccessful voyage. For the next voyage of the *Rising States*, Johnson held a quarter share and outfitted the vessel; it also had an all-Black crew. It set sail from New Bedford on July 13th, 1837 for the Atlantic fisheries and elsewhere. This voyage was a disaster, resulting in the deaths of the master and several members of the crew and the confiscation of the ship as being unseaworthy. Upon his death, his sons, Richard C. and Ezra R. Johnson inherited his share of another of Richard Johnson's vessels, the *Washington*. Ezra by that time was also operating his chandlery in New Bedford.

Besides his business success, Johnson was well-known for his involvement in economic developmental activities for Black sailors, and for his anti-slavery positions such as membership in the Massachusetts Antislavery Society and Treasurer of the New Bedford Union Society, an affiliate of the American Union for the Relief and Improvement of the Colored Race (Putney 1982, 46). He was also a longtime subscriber and store agent of William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator*; William C. Nell (1855, 91) indicated that Johnson "was always ready to extend a hand of relief to his enslaved countrymen, and no one was more ready to assist, according to his ability, the elevation of his People".

John Mashow (1805-1893)

John Mashow's history is different from that of other entrepreneurs in this research. He was born in 1805 of an enslaved mother and her white slave owner (John Mashow) on a rice plantation in Georgetown, South Carolina. By a provision in the will of his father after whom he was named, when John was ten, he was freed from slavery and sent to Padanaram, Massachusetts, to the Thatcher household to learn the trade of a ship's carpenter because he had expressed a strong interest in construction to his father. The Massachusetts Thatchers were acquaintances and relatives of the Thatchers in Georgetown. It was in Padanaram that its founder, Laban Thatcher, built and successfully operated a shipyard, a wharf, windmill, and magnesia factory. Mashow served his apprenticeship in this shipyard and proved to be very skilled in both construction and design.

In 1830 John married Hope Amos of the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe at the age of 26; they had eight children. A year later, he earned his master carpenter's certificate and established his own shipbuilding firm. He was so successful that during his lifetime, he designed, constructed, or both more than 100 ships (Sidney Kaplan 1991, 235). Twenty of those built between 1833 and 1858 were whalers that were collectively used on more than 139 whaling voyages. Mashow formed a shipyard in Padaranam in 1845 with Alonzo Mathews, James Madison Babbitt, and Frederick Smally called Mathews, Mashow & Co. Thirty-five vessels of his total output came between 1845 and 1858 under the auspices of this corporation. Finley (2021, 20-21) estimated that the whale harvests from these ships were worth more than $181 million (2020 value). Despite this success, the U.S. Panic of 1857 more than likely caused Mathews, Mashow & Co. to declare bankruptcy in 1858 having built fourteen barks, one brig, nineteen schooners, and one sloop (L.A. Littlefield 1903). A public testimonial for John Mashow at the closure declared him to be "a thorough, practical master ship builder and a most worthy and respected citizen" (Finley 2021, 24). *The Mercury* of New Bedford said, "the name of John Mashow deserves to be ranked undoubtedly with those of our best naval architects ... [a] true genius" (Finley 2021, 24).

Often shipbuilders would take partial ownership in their ships so that their clients could afford them. Mashow did so for at least seven ships, some of which had his sons as crewmen. "For 30 years his ships had a reputation for putting them among the best on the water" (Finley 2021, 22). Many of his clients were white such as Benjamin Cummings for whom he built a whaler "Benjamin Cummings" that included a life-sized figurehead of the owner. During its twenty-one years of whaling, this whaler returned $8.3 million (2021 value) to its owners (Finley, 2021, 22).

Edward J. Pompey (1800-1848)

Pompey was second generation free Black of Nantucket and was better known for his work as a civic-minded businessman and abolitionist than for his participation in the whaling industry, even though he served as a crew member and a captain on whaling ships and shared ownership of several of them. Only once was he captain of a whaling ship, the *Rising States*, having been coaxed to do so by Richard Johnson. He was a friend of Absalom Boston (described earlier), interacted with members of the Paul Cuffe family (also described above), and of William Lloyd Garrison with whom he corresponded (Finley 2020a, 51-54). From his store, perhaps in the New Guinea area of Nantucket, he sold subscriptions to Garrison's *The Liberator* and Garrison's book on African Colonization as well as *The Colored American*, an African American weekly published in New York (NHA, Social Activism).

Working with Absalom Boston and other prominent Blacks and whites of Nantucket, Pompey had a role in several significant petitions to the Massachusetts Legislature. He was a signer on Boston's 1839 petition requesting immediate repeal of all laws that make a distinction "on account of color" (ibid.). Perhaps more significantly in 1844-45, along with over 100 Black people from Nantucket, Pompey became the lead petitioner to amend the Common School Law of Massachusetts to ensure equal rights regardless of color. Three additional petitions signed by both Black and white members of the Nantucket community followed; together they led the Massachusetts Legislature to pass the first law in the United States guaranteeing equality in public education (ibid.).

Pompey was considered a prominent abolitionist who attended the New England Anti-Slavery Convention of 1834 and other such conventions as a representative of Nantucket and was President of the Nantucket Colored Temperance Society in 1842. There is no record of his having married nor having children.

Lewis Temple (~1800-1854)

Temple was born enslaved in Richmond, Virginia, around about 1800. He arrived as a freeman in New Bedford in 1829 but the action that freed him is unknown. Though illiterate, he was a skilled blacksmith who set up his shop at Coffin's Wharf. There he fashioned harpoons and other metal works necessary to the whaling industry. At the time, each whaling voyage often used between 150-200 harpoons, so there was a high demand for his work. He was very successful at his trade and soon established what was known as a whalecraft shop where ship outfitters could purchase the necessary hardware for whaling and cargo voyages. A significant number of his customers purchasing harpoons complained to him about how often the harpoon worked loose from the whale's flesh after it was impaled. This meant not only that the whale was lost, but also all of the effort to get the whale was wasted, which sometimes included a loss of life or injury.

Temple decided he would work on fashioning a better harpoon. The one that he invented had a pivoting barb or a toggle that was secured by a small wooden pin. After the harpoon was embedded in the whale any action by the whale or tension on the line caused the pin to break, sending out a barb 90 degrees from the shaft and embedding it deeper into the flesh (Dolin 2007, 250). This invention, known as "Temple's Toggle or Temple's Iron", became the industry standard helping the harvesting of whales globally create its Golden Age. Clifford Ashley (1926, 86-87), a maritime historian, declared "Temple's harpoon was the single most important invention in the whole history of whaling". Unfortunately, Temple did not patent this invention (perhaps because of his lack of education) choosing instead to sell it along with other goods in his shop. The whalecraft shop was so profitable that he was in the process of expanding to a new shop when he tripped and fell in a hole on the city sidewalk in front of some construction. He successfully sued the city of New Bedford and was awarded $2000; however, he was not able to collect as he died of his injuries before payment was made.

Temple was a family man, marrying Mary Clark of Baltimore shortly after he arrived in New Bedford. They had three children, a son and two daughters (Finley 2020a, 170). He was also known as an abolitionist and was elected Vice President of the New Bedford Union Society in 1834, the city's first anti-slavery group. No other information about his other abolition or civic activities has been recorded. His son, Lewis Temple Jr., trained as a blacksmith under his father and like him became a well-known businessman in New Bedford (Kaplan 1953, 79; McKissack and McKissack 1999, 57).

Conclusions and Future Research Suggestions

This paper underscores how the achievements and innovations made by Black entrepreneurs to our nation's economy have often been neglected, especially prior to 1865 when the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution was passed abolishing slavery in the US and its possessions. Similarly, the contribution of the whaling industry to the US economy and abolition is not commonly recognized. The whaling industry offered people of color an unparalleled opportunity to become wealthy based on job performance rather than skin color. Several men, like Paul Cuffe, James Forten, and William T. Shorey, were considered to be among the wealthiest African Americans in the nation during their time. But they were active in more than their occupation; they helped abolish slavery and advance other civil rights like funding schools for both boys and girls, regardless of their race.

It also underscores that there is more work to be done to uncover the stories of the everyday entrepreneurs of colors who made vital contributions to their communities. Through the networks these people formed both within their business associations and their private affiliations, more entrepreneurs can be discovered, and a better understanding might be developed.

Furthermore, these narratives suggest that other aspects of Black entrepreneurship and management, such as family succession and career progression might benefit from a closer and comparative look with white enterprises at the time.

Limitations of this Study

While there are logbooks, port records, and significant databases describing crew members and whaling activities, the reporting of these are sometimes misleading, in error, or confusing, especially when oral history or personal journals are used as a source. Because of COVID-19 travel restrictions, detailed information about the captains in this study was not complete nor adequate to conduct statistical analysis. Perhaps by increasing the number of entrepreneurs through networks and further research, one could broaden the sample size to provide a data set to examine such areas of study like career progression.

Future Research

This paper suggests the opportunity to do additional studies both in the fields of business and in the historical context of the time. For example, one could expand the pool of Black entrepreneurs to include those mentioned in the various cited works and those tangentially related to the whaling industry, such as: Peter and Alexander Howard (sons-in-law of Paul Cuffe and who ran a mercantile in Westport, Massachusetts); Ezra Johnson, son of Richard Johnson; and apprentice James Forten, who later ran his father's store and chandlery (*Pacific Appeal* 1870); Mary Pleasant, who learned business skills in Nantucket when she lived and worked for a white whaling family and is sometimes considered one of the first Black self-made millionaires (Tom Huddleston Jr. 2020). In addition, further examination of suppliers, customers, church and society organization membership lists, city directories, and other sources may help develop a statistically significant group for quantitative studies. Because the whaling agents, customs officers, and port officials were required to keep meticulous records, much of the data from those times are more readily available than that of other industries.

Similarly, this group of Black entrepreneurs might be useful in the study of such topics as career advancement and mobility, family enterprises, and network affiliations.

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