

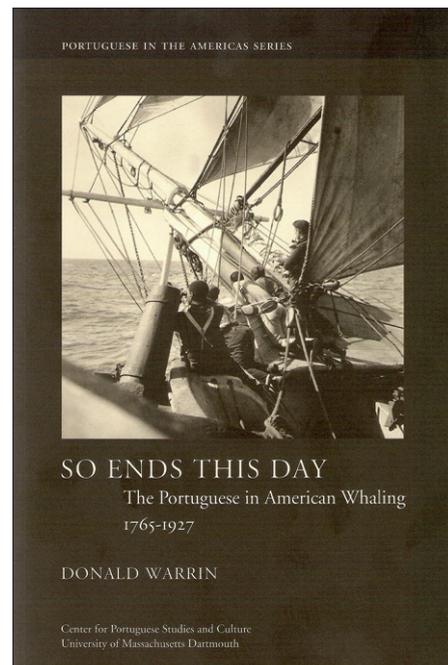
(2010) DONALD WARRIN, *SO ENDS THIS DAY:
THE PORTUGUESE IN AMERICAN WHALING, 1765-1927.*
NORTH DARTMOUTH, MASS., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS,
CENTER FOR PORTUGUESE STUDIES AND CULTURE.

Michael P. Dyer – New Bedford Whaling Museum.

In *So Ends This Day*, Don Warrin uses firsthand narrative texts painstakingly gathered from over thirty American archival repositories to compile “yarn after yarn” underscoring every aspect of the Portuguese-American whaling story from the mid-18th to the early 20th centuries. His compilation of primary source voices is the greatest strength of this book. These real stories of real Portuguese mariners, most of whom hailed from the islands of the Atlantic, are integrated thoroughly into the thousands of documented American whaling voyages and provide layer upon layer of new perspectives on the industry. From race relations to capital investment *So Ends This Day* covers the involvement of this important class of island mariner and does so largely from their own perspective.

The book is arranged into seven chapters including four chronological chapters segmenting the history into beginning, heyday (1835-1860), decline (1860-1900) and end (1900-1927), an introductory chapter, a conclusion and an epilogue. In the first

chapter entitled “Background,” he introduces the industry “from its remote beginnings to its anticlimactic end.” He describes the relationship of the Portuguese islands of the Atlantic to American whaling focusing on the general locations and geography of the archipelagos of the Azores, Cape Verde and Madeira and their earlier



history. Each chapter is further segmented into sub-headings. In “Background,” for instance, he describes the business of whaling, the lay system of paying wages, the species of whales that were hunted and a very interesting portion called “Half-share Men” where he tells the story of the early Nantucket wage system of paying native Americans and others from “off-island” considered of “unequal stature” half of the amount paid to the local Nantucket Yankees.

What makes this book particularly interesting is the way that Warrin frames many oft-told aspects of the industry around the perspective of the Portuguese mariner while also presenting newly documented facets of the industry, such as the facts surrounding “Half-share Men,” in the same perspective. Increasingly, as time goes on, historians, scholars and others are coming to pay closer attention to the activities of many different groups of people who participated in the whale fishery. Given the adventurous nature of the whaling story, its ethnographic contacts, its great literature and the folk-art associated with it, scholarly focus on the participants has been limited to the most sensational, but that is changing. Scholars in the mainstream literature like Joan Druett, Lisa Norling, Briton Cooper Busch, Jeffrey Bolster and others have all worked to highlight the par-

ticipation of women and people of color in American whaling. Others, like Susan Lebo and Rhys Richards, have been writing for years in the more rarified scholarly journals about the industry’s impact on native peoples. By examining the significant but somewhat marginalized labor force of Atlantic islanders Warrin has uncovered significant details of the industry never before thoroughly described.

In a fashion somewhat unusual for a history of this type, Warrin uses these sub-headings to highlight whatever particular primary quote he happens to have uncovered that fits the topic at hand. While this organizational strategy gives the reader an exact interpretation of the topic, overall much of the book becomes somewhat repetitive as the circumstances of crewmen joining whaling vessels and the actions that take place on those vessels really do not vary tremendously down the years. He does not distinguish important aspects of the Portuguese experience from general aspects of American whaling but strings the stories along in his chronological format until he reaches the end. In a way this is enlightening because the Portuguese mariner’s perspective infuses the story throughout, and given the excellence of the book’s three indices, researchers and scholars can access the most impor-

tant primary materials easily. In another way it's slightly less satisfying as his analysis of the history is limited as he lets the primary voices take over.

Chapter 3 covers life in the Atlantic islands, the main ports of North American whaling and the areas of ocean where whaling took place. He includes sealing, the California gold rush, the slave trade, the Pacific and Western Arctic, as well as some fine illustrations of Portuguese settlements in New Zealand. This chapter and chapter 4 are the strongest in the book, as one might imagine; the 19th century being the period when the fishery was at its height, and actual Portuguese islanders' involvement in it the most influential.

Chapter 4 documents the decline of American whaling, in particular the New Bedford fleet at a time when the bulk of the masters and crews as well as some agents were Portuguese immigrants. In this important chapter Warrin provides biographical details for many of the most famous and important transitional Portuguese business people in New Bedford. These persons, mostly men, came from the islands of the Atlantic but integrated themselves into the capitalist, commercial fabric of the community becoming very successful citizens. The city was in a period of economic flux and opportunities for investment

became more diverse. This is where one finds people like Antone Sylvia (1840-1920), an Azorean businessman in New Bedford in the late 19th century. He owned shares in many vessels and managed many whaling voyages. He owned property all over the city including a cigar manufacturing firm. Sylvia also owned and managed packet ships including the *Veronica* and the *Moses B. Tower*, trading goods between New Bedford, the Azores and Madeira and returning with passengers.

Chapter 5, in addition to documenting the end of commercial whaling in the U.S.A. also covers the important west coast connections and Canadian dimensions of the story and in this chapter will be found some of the more fascinating stories such as that of Jabbertown, Alaska (so-called because when all of the races living there began speaking at once, actual language was indecipherable) near Point Hope on the North Slope, where, in a prime example of how whaling impacted world cultures, "a number of Portuguese were living with native women." He also devotes a section of this chapter to the Cape Verdean whalers who settled in the Western Arctic.

By the early 20th century the American whale fishery had definitely reached a point where a small number of small vessels sailing on short

voyages to whaling grounds in the Atlantic could provide enough sperm oil for specialized industrial applications. By chapter 6, whaling was a very small, dying enterprise. The big business in New Bedford was the textile mills and other manufacturing firms located along the Acushnet River. It was to these types of industries that the bulk of Portuguese immigrants to New Bedford went to work

but as Warrin demonstrates whaling was undoubtedly the original impetus. His conclusion is that Portuguese involvement grew throughout the history of American whaling and that by its end they were the predominant participants and even after whaling completely ended in the U.S.A., Portuguese mariners continued to pursue maritime trades. MICHAEL P. DYER