

## Shifts in Yankee whaling practices in the Caribbean 1762-1921

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We examined records of 454 Yankee whaling voyages to the wider Caribbean (including Bermuda and the Gulf of Mexico) from 1762 until 1921. Our goal was to reveal any patterns of association among attributes such as length of the voyage, type of vessel, whaling grounds visited, and port of origin. In addition we partitioned the records into four 40 year periods and also with respect to the American Civil War to determine if there were shifts in practices over time. We found that there were significant increases in voyage duration during this period as well as changes in the type of vessels used. There were also changes in areas visited and an increasing prevalence of voyages originating from New Bedford compared to those originating elsewhere in New England. We suggest that shifts in voyage lengths, vessel types, and areas visited were in response to shifting areas of depletion of local populations of humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), the main target of Yankee whaling in that geographical area. The increasing preeminence of New Bedford as a port of origin during the Civil War and afterwards is probably best explained by the increasing difficulty in finding traditional Yankee sailors to serve as crew in whaling ships while at the same time New Bedford became a destination for many African Americans during and after the Civil War. They, as well as immigrants from the Caribbean, were beginning to play a substantial role in whaling.