

Newfoundland Involvement in Twentieth-century Shore-station Whaling in British Columbia

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Newfoundland Involvement in Twentieth-century Shore-station Whaling in British Columbia

C.W. SANGER and A.B. DICKINSON

1. INTRODUCTION

THE EVOLUTION OF commercial whaling has been characterized by recurring cycles of exploitation and relocation, of interdependence and adaptation. The modern industry evolved through a sequence of stages, each of which began with discovery and hopeful enterprise, passed through a phase of rapid expansion, intense competition and ruthless exploitation, and ended in declining resources and failure (Fig. 1). The discovery of new whaling grounds or the introduction of innovative technologies rejuvenated ailing industries, leading to further unregulated hunting and continued depletion of stocks, again followed by industrial cessation. New technologies permitted harvesting of previously unexploited species and often initiated new fisheries with development patterns and operational methods similar to earlier phases (Fig. 2).¹

The development of late 19th/early 20th century shore-station whaling in Newfoundland and British Columbia followed this model. Previously unexploited species could now be hunted, using the explosive harpoon and steam catcher technology introduced by Sven Foynd in Norway from 1868.² The development and operation of these North American industries were similar in both the northwest Atlantic and northeast Pacific, and shared a variety of equipment and personnel interconnections.

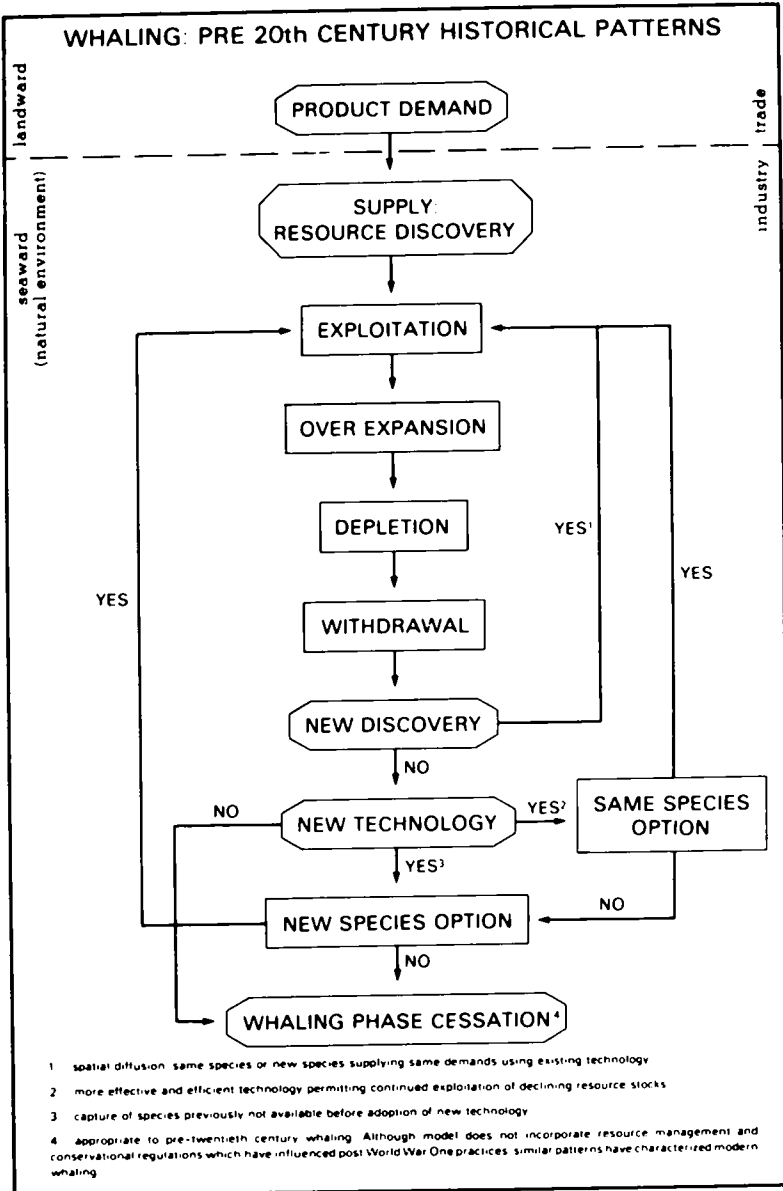


Figure 1.

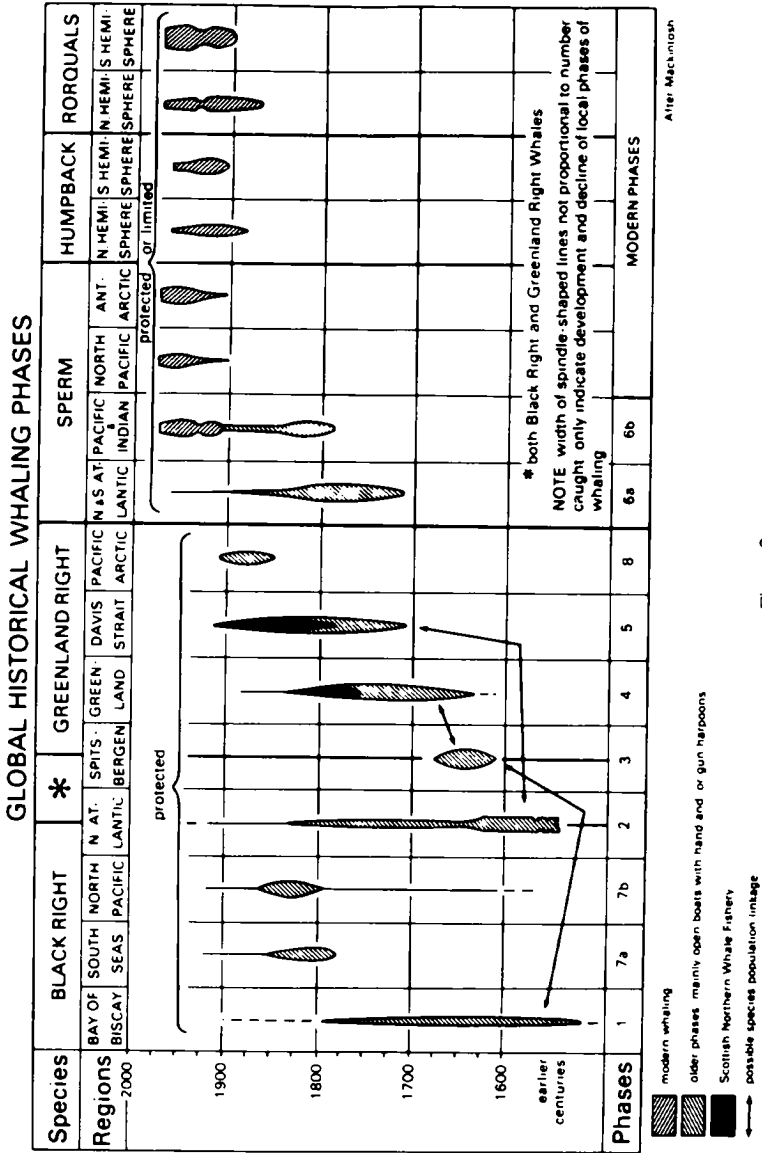


Figure 2.

2. INDUSTRIAL CONNECTIONS: NEWFOUNDLAND AND B.C.

a. *The beginning.* The development and operation of modern shore-station whaling in British Columbia were primarily due to the activities of a small group of local and Newfoundland entrepreneurs.³ The latter arrived as their domestic industry began to decline after 1905⁴ from overexploitation, decreasing catches and high operating costs (Fig. 3).⁵

The British Columbia industry owed its origins to Captain Sprott Balcom of Halifax who brought his sealing schooner around Cape Horn to British Columbia in 1892,⁶ with his wife and family later following by rail and joining him in Victoria.⁷ He became associated with William Grant, principal partner in the Victoria Sealing Company, for the remainder of the decade, but maintained his Halifax connections through his son Harry, also a sealing master.⁸ Sprott Balcom was thus probably aware of the successful operations of the Cabot Steam Whaling Co. Ltd., established as the first such Newfoundland company in 1896, which began hunting in 1898⁹ at Snook's Arm (Fig. 4). The company's activities had been widely reported in major Maritime Canada newspapers, the *Halifax Chronicle* for example commenting that

the recent establishment of a whale oil manufactory in Notre Dame Bay calls attention to the fact whaling is now a paying venture off the coast of Newfoundland. Recently seven whales worth nearly \$1,000 each were captured by a company of Norwegian whalers. There is no apparent reason why Halifax should not become an outfitting port for the whaling industry.¹⁰

Further, Balcom returned to Halifax in 1900¹¹ and probably familiarized himself with the expanding Newfoundland whaling industry. He then convinced William Grant and the Victoria Sealing Company to use Newfoundland/Norwegian methods, equipment and personnel to start a similar industry in British Columbia.¹²

The Pacific Whaling Company was established in 1904¹³ and an application was made to the Minister of Marine and Fisheries of the Government of Canada for whaling rights on the Canadian west coast. Sprott Balcom went to Newfoundland to examine thoroughly that industry's methods.¹⁴ He probably spent considerable time with Dr. Ludwig Rissmuller, a major participant in the Newfoundland industry (see below, 2.c), at his Little St. Lawrence factory.¹⁵ Balcom was thus able to observe the local industry first-hand, and hired men skilled in station construction and operation, particularly

Mr. Charles Smith of St. John's, Newfoundland an expert in the construction and equipment of whaling factories, who at present is en route with Capt. Sprott Balcom to the Pacific coast to supervise the construction equipment and establishment of the necessary plant for the proper conduct of the business.¹⁶

St. John's newspapers also confirmed that "Chas. Smith... and a large number of others"¹⁷ had left for British Columbia to construct and "manage a whaling factory — the first to be erected there,"¹⁸ and that

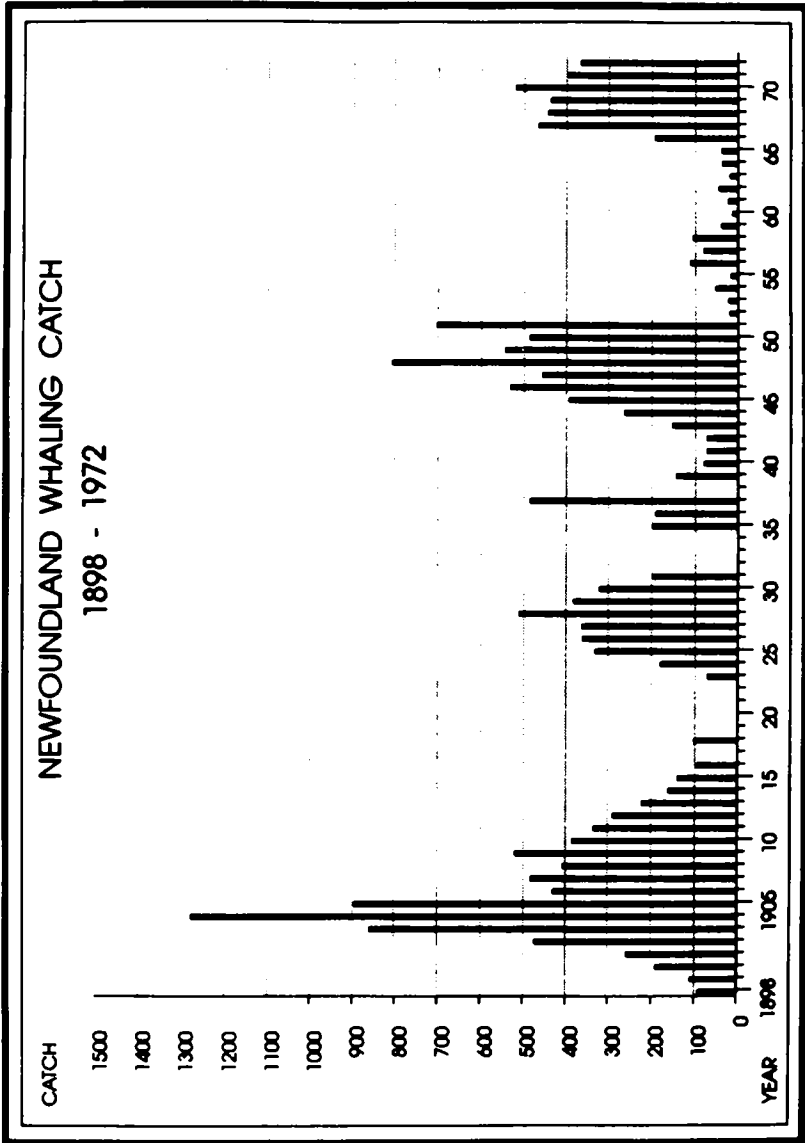


Figure 3.



Figure 4.

Shore-station Whaling 103

A gentleman [Sprott Balcom] recently arrived here from British Columbia to obtain expert management for a whale factory about to be erected on the coast of the Province. A man [Charles Smith] well versed in the prosecution and conducting of the fishery has been secured at a salary of \$1600 per annum.¹⁹

The Newfoundland industry thus exerted considerable influence on the early 20th century revival of British Columbia whaling. The possibility of large profits from this new industry also motivated some Newfoundland entrepreneurs²⁰ to consider investing in British Columbia whaling where labour was cheap and construction costs were about one quarter of those in Newfoundland. However, "parties from St. John's who had their eyes on the whaling of British Columbia and had sent agents out there to locate stations if possible, found it was useless,"²¹ since the British Columbia legislature restricted whaling station construction "by any persons except residents five years in the province."²²

b. *Legislation.* By 1903, entrepreneurs from Newfoundland and Atlantic Canada were applying to the Canadian Ministry of Marine and Fisheries for approval to begin whaling in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.²³ In view of this increasing interest in both Atlantic and Pacific coast whaling, the Minister decided in August, 1904, to amend the existing Fisheries Act and introduce controls on Canadian whaling.

These were similar to and based on those introduced by the Government of Newfoundland in its 1902 Whaling Act,²⁴ the first Act outside of Norway designed to manage modern whaling. The Canadian regulations controlled factory construction and hunting, and attempted to minimise aquatic pollution and protect local fisheries. Companies were required to purchase a nine-year licence at an annual fee of \$1,200.²⁵ Stations were to be at least fifty miles apart²⁶ to reduce processing odour and competition for the same local stock. Potential over-exploitation was countered by allowing each factory to employ only one catcher (i.e., whaling ship),²⁷ operating within fifty miles of the station. Tow boats were prohibited, preventing catchers from remaining on the grounds for extended periods and killing excessive numbers of whales. Hunting was also prohibited within specified distances of other vessels, an attempt to reduce interference with local traffic and fishing. Violations could result in licence forfeiture without refund and a fine of up to \$200.²⁸

In contrast to the situation in Newfoundland, the Canadian regulations were introduced before the first whale was killed, probably helping to prolong the British Columbia industry. Unfortunately, the regulations proved as ineffective as in Newfoundland,²⁹ primarily because the killing of females was allowed, thus adversely affecting stock recruitment. Further, limits were not placed on the number of licences awarded or on the maximum seasonal catch per station. Nevertheless, introduction of legislation based on the Newfoundland Act allowed British Columbia whaling to begin in a regulated manner.³⁰

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The passing of the Act was particularly responsible for the development of linkages between the Newfoundland and British Columbia industries. Based on knowledge obtained from Newfoundland prior to 1904, the Ministry of Marine and Fisheries insisted "that whales be completely and thoroughly processed within twenty-four hours, without dumping 'noxious or deleterious matter' into the waterways."³¹ This arose from the development in Newfoundland by Dr. Rissmuller of methods for processing flensed carcasses – methods subsequently controlled by him through personal patents.

c. *Dr. Ludwig Rissmuller.* Although he is referred to as "the whale king of Nfld. and B.C.,"³² little is known of Rissmuller's background prior to his arrival in Newfoundland. Often described as "a German-American chemist and engineer,"³³ Ludwig Rissmuller was affiliated with the F.A. Rissmuller Chemische Dunger-Fabrik in Germany³⁴ and maintained close ties with at least one brother, Julius, who lived there.³⁵ He married into a wealthy New York family,³⁶ and travelled extensively³⁷ before arriving in Newfoundland shortly after the Cabot Steam Whaling Co. Ltd. opened its second station at Balaena (Fig. 4) in 1899.³⁸ On September 20, 1900, the *St. John's Evening Herald* reported that "Dr. Rismuller (sic) left by train yesterday for Snook's Arm,³⁹ with a view of establishing a guano factory in connection with the whaling business." Rissmuller had already developed "methods for making 'guano' from dried and ground fish offal; this was sold as chicken feed and cattle fodder."⁴⁰ It is uncertain what attracted him to Newfoundland; most likely he was "induced...to visit some of our whale factories"⁴¹ by the Hon. John Harvey, principal investor in the Cabot Steam Whaling Co. Ltd.⁴² Rissmuller quickly recognized the potential for adapting his methods to the processing of discarded whale carcasses, which were detrimental to both the inshore fishery and communities adjacent to whaling stations.⁴³

Rissmuller visited all three Newfoundland whaling stations operating in 1901,⁴⁴ and by the following year had developed equipment and procedures to process the carcasses and provide further welcome employment in the largely subsistence export economy. The positive impact on the Newfoundland whaling industry, and the respect thus commanded,⁴⁵ are shown in a report that

A gentleman who arrived here some time ago is now on the west coast [at the Chaleur Bay whaling station (Fig. 4)] where he has employed several hundred men for the purpose of extracting oil from the refuse carcass (sic) of whales, when the factory people have got all they want, and for the manufacture of guano. This gentleman, Dr. Rismuller (sic), has patented several methods for work of this kind and believes there is a great field in the colony for such. He proposes erecting a similar plant to the three now in operation in Fortune Bay at Snook's Arm and possibly elsewhere. Those who went from St. John's with him to assist in the work of building speak in high terms of his uniform kindness to all his employees.⁴⁶

Most, if not all, Newfoundland whaling stations were using his equipment⁴⁷ by the end of 1902, that under construction at Cape Broyle⁴⁸ (Fig.

4) having "a large factory near the site of the whale-house for the conversion of the offal and carcasses of the fish [whales] into fertilizer."⁴⁹ Rissmuller's lawyer was thus able to inform the Newfoundland Minister of Marine and Fisheries on November 18, 1902, that "Dr. Rissmuller's company is doing all the scavenging work for all the whale factories."⁵⁰ His firm, The Colonial Manufacturing Company, established with the financial backing of his father-in-law,⁵¹ also took full control of the Cape Broyle guano factory which commenced operations under his direct supervision on April 7, 1903, and

with its additional improvements, proved a greater success. Not a flaw was shown in any of its workings. Crowds flocked from the adjoining settlements to witness this truly great invention of a public benefactor. Three cheers for the doctor.⁵²

Rissmuller immediately developed plans to build a fully integrated whaling and guano factory at Little St. Lawrence.⁵³ Construction was "in full swing"⁵⁴ by early November, 1903, and it was to be an

up-to-date whale factory under the immediate supervision of Dr. Rismuller (sic), the German-American scientist, who has done more for whaling and the use of the whale products than any other living man. To him is owed the utilisation of every part of the whale, including the flesh, the blood and liver, and parts of the skin which were only regarded as wastage a few years ago.⁵⁵

Rissmuller was therefore involved in virtually all aspects of Newfoundland shore-station whaling when Captain Sprott Balcom arrived in Newfoundland. His innovations had been developed and tested locally, were protected by patent,⁵⁶ and were available for incorporation into the British Columbia industry.

Newfoundland whaling began to decline⁵⁷ before Rissmuller could dominate the industry. Looking for fresh opportunities elsewhere, he gave permission in January, 1904, to a consortium of Balcom's competitors who were also attempting to begin whaling in British Columbia

for the use of my patented Whale Reduction Process in the factories to be erected...by them...[The method] has been used for over three years in Newfoundland and has proved efficient.⁵⁸

Sprott Balcom's first factory began operation at Sechart, B.C. (Figs. 5 and 6) in September, 1905, without Rissmuller's equipment. However, since the 1904 legislation required "that whale carcasses be processed and disposed of within twenty-four hours,"⁵⁹ it is not surprising that in December, 1905, Rissmuller arrived at Sechart as a major shareholder in the Pacific Whaling Company.⁶⁰ The formal arrangements between Rissmuller and Balcom were contained in a November 29, 1905, Memorandum of Agreement wherein

Rissmuller transferred to the Pacific Whaling Company, in perpetuity, all rights to his processes, methods, and machinery as well as his personal services as consulting chemist and engineer. Rissmuller also agreed to train and supervise assistants...to perform the necessary "alterations" of the "whaling establishments and oil refineries of the...Company".

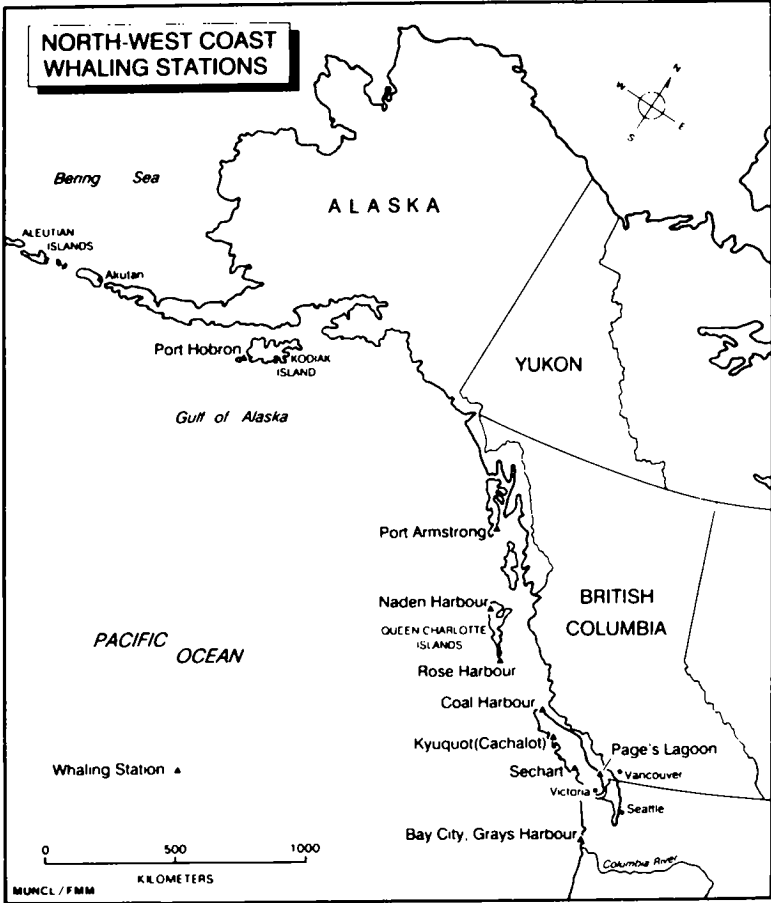


Figure 5.

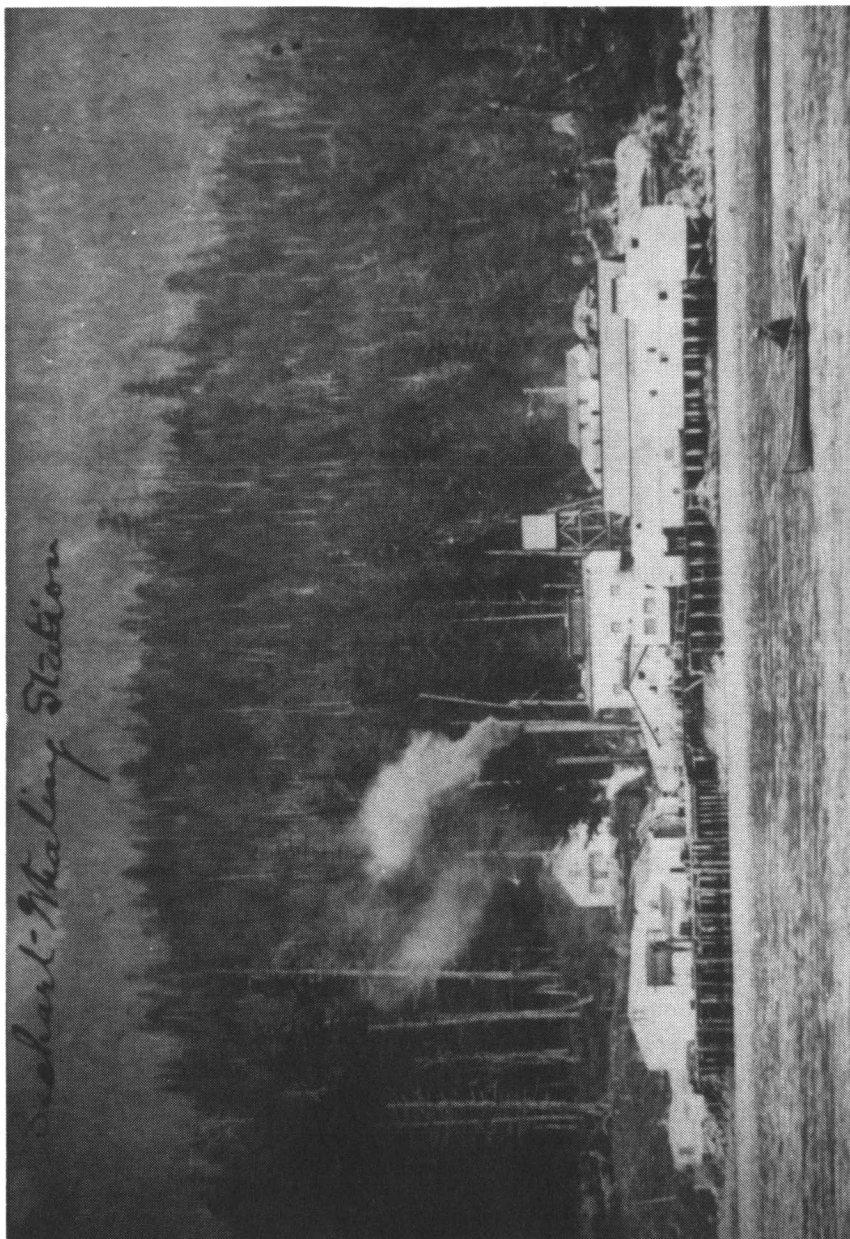


Figure 6. Sechart whaling station.

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In exchange, the company gave Rissmuller all 1,982 issued shares of its common stock. The value of the stock was \$97,800, and the arrangement made Rissmuller a major shareholder.⁶¹

The Pacific Whaling Company was thus able to meet the newly introduced government regulations. Balcom also successfully argued that his Company was the only one authorized to use Rissmuller's process and should thus be given a monopoly, writing that "we therefore think, that it is only fair, that other Companies should not be allowed to use inferior processes, by which the waters would be polluted and by which the reputation of the whaling industry would be hurt."⁶²

The Pacific Whaling Company was reorganized in 1910 as Canadian North Pacific Fisheries Ltd.,⁶³ with Rissmuller continuing in his former management position⁶⁴ and becoming a driving force in Balcom's decision to expand operations into the United States.⁶⁵ Rissmuller remained active in west coast whaling until he died in a San Diego sanatorium on April 16, 1916.⁶⁶

3. NEWFOUNDLAND WHALING PERSONNEL IN B.C.

Whaling personnel in British Columbia, as elsewhere, could be categorized as managerial staff (e.g., station manager, engineer, bookkeeper), skilled workers (e.g., blacksmith, fireman, crew foreman, cooper), and labourers, usually "fifty or more Japanese and about the same number of Chinese...secured at cheap rates through contractors, and...typically supporting families in the Orient."⁶⁷ Newfoundlanders made up a significant proportion of the first two categories in the British Columbia industry.

Following his 1905 association with the Pacific Whaling Company, Rissmuller immediately imported experienced Newfoundlanders to operate the Sechart factory, including, according to the *Victoria Colonist*, one of his best assistants who "will arrive shortly from Newfoundland to run the plant — is an engineer who understands chemicals...and all the incidentals of the business."⁶⁸ This was almost certainly Edward (Ned) Scaplen⁶⁹ who, with Charles Smith,⁷⁰ was involved in constructing the early whaling stations in Newfoundland and who had assisted Rissmuller in building his own factories in 1903.⁷¹

The need for these experienced Newfoundland managers and engineers increased as Rissmuller became more involved in daily operations of the Pacific Whaling Company, and as his machinery was installed at Sechart, and at Page's Lagoon (Fig. 7) and Kyuquot (Fig. 8), stations opened in 1907.⁷² A clause in Rissmuller's agreement with the Pacific Whaling Company stipulated that his men were to operate the plants until such time as local men could be trained.⁷³ These top management positions could generally only be filled by experienced Newfoundlanders since "there are...few Americans and Canadians, mostly men who have had experience in the Atlantic whaling [that] can be trusted with the more important positions."⁷⁴

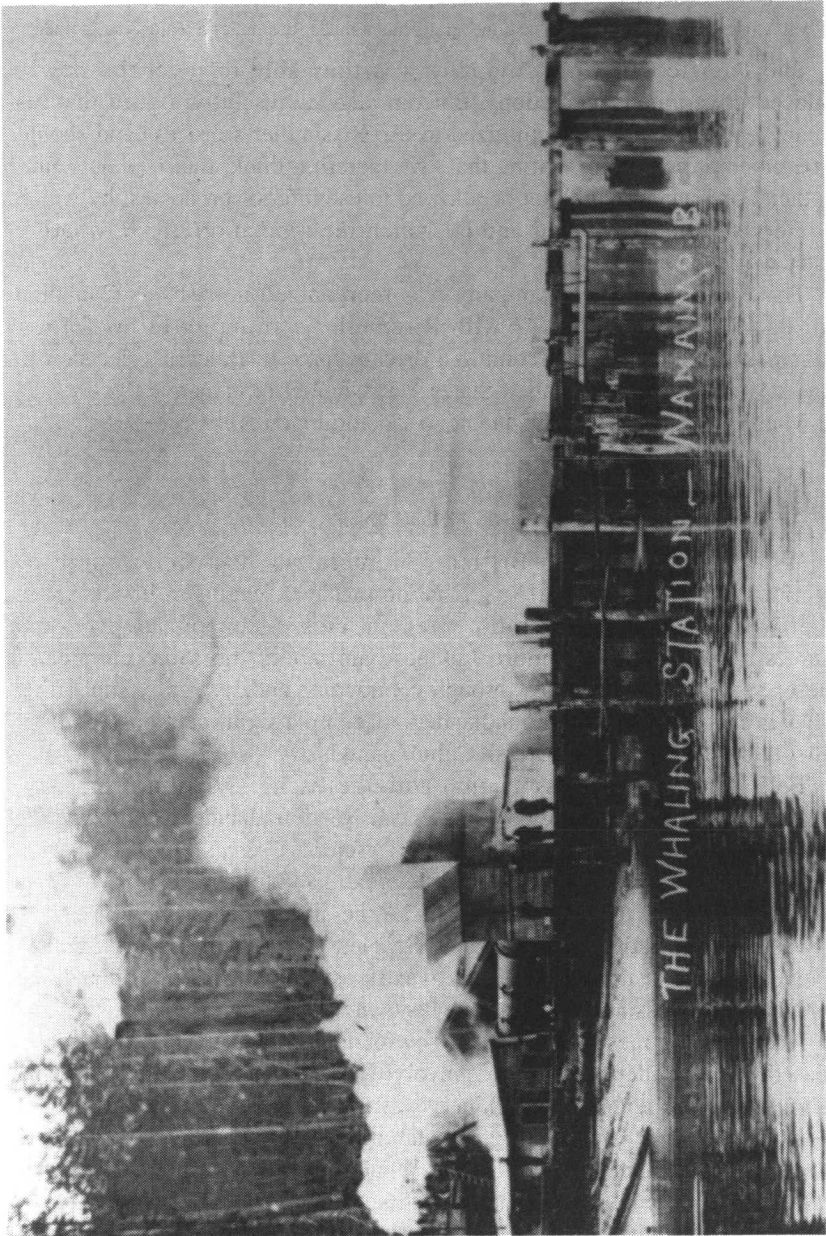


Figure 7. Page's Lagoon (Nanaimo) whaling station.

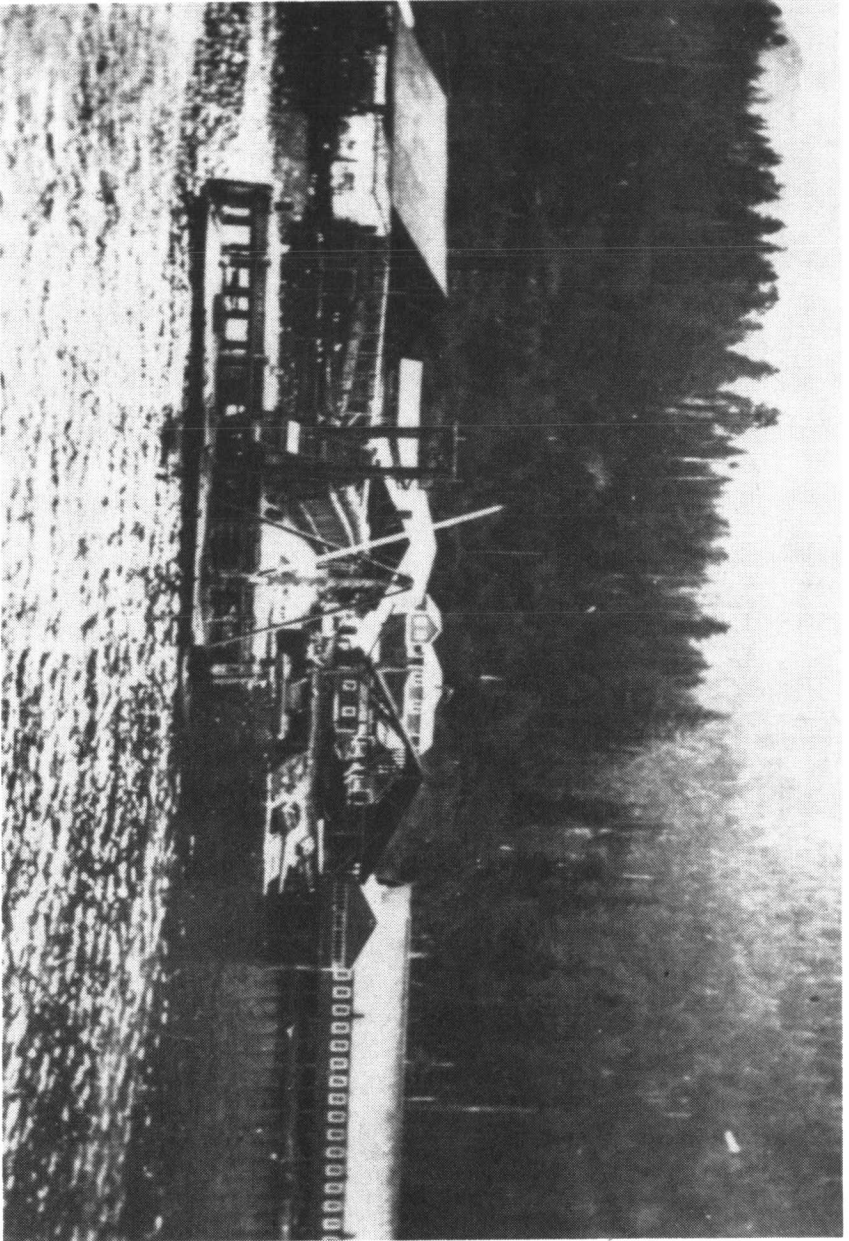


Figure 8. Kyuquot (Cachalot) whaling station.

Page's Lagoon closed down after one season and the company's fourth station at Rose Harbour (Fig. 5) did not begin operations until 1910, thus limiting the number of managerial positions filled by this small group of Newfoundlanders. Others brought out by Rissmuller as the Newfoundland industry declined from 1905 included: Alfred Gosney, Jr., "who was engineer with Dr. Rismuller (sic) at Rosiru (sic),"⁷⁵ and who became manager of Sechart in 1910;⁷⁶ M.F. Carrol, "who was working in a very responsible position" with the Pacific Whaling Company,⁷⁷ having moved to Victoria after supervising the sale of Rissmuller's station at Little St. Lawrence;⁷⁸ and Captain George Le Marquand, sometime manager of the Little St. Lawrence factory, who moved to British Columbia in January, 1911, "to take charge of one of the whaling company's steamers with which Dr. Rismuller (sic) is connected."⁷⁹ Le Marquand later managed the Rose Harbour, Naden Harbour, and Bay City stations (Fig. 5), before becoming Vice-President and General Manager of the Consolidated Whaling Corporation from 1920⁸⁰ to 1932.⁸¹ The importance of these expatriate Newfoundlanders to British Columbia whaling is shown by the fact that all four top managerial positions listed on the Victoria Whaling Company letterhead in 1916 were occupied by men previously in the Newfoundland industry.⁸²

The small and exclusive Newfoundland whaling fraternity in British Columbia was bound together through their Rissmuller connection. These were often cemented further by kinship bonds, and their long-term commitment to British Columbia whaling. Families were also uprooted and virtually all existing kin and community linkages with Newfoundland severed. Consequently, one manager's granddaughter would later write that

for most of the women it was a wrenching experience leaving tightly-knit Newfoundland communities and crossing a continent to isolated west coast whaling stations. Though they rarely lived on the same stations, these women and children formed bonds of friendship that lasted their lifetimes.⁸³

Although the company's "tendership *Gray* was always carrying them back and forth [between stations] on visits,"⁸⁴ their off-season residences in Victoria gradually became the permanent homes for these men and their families. The younger members inevitably became integrated into the local community, however much the original generation continued to maintain their Newfoundland identity and connections. As Olive Miles, daughter of Ned Scaplen, commented in reference to her parents and their Newfoundland friends: "They were very clannish — they kept in touch."⁸⁵ Similarly, Joan Goddard, granddaughter of William Rolls, another of the original Newfoundland managers, recalled her mother saying that:

I think that was the strange part about them — they were a very close-knit group and stayed that way all their lives. They came out together from Newfoundland, worked together in the whaling, lived near each other in Victoria, and looked after each other.⁸⁶

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The new industry also imported many Newfoundlanders to fill skilled middle management and supervisory positions. These were again recruited by Rissmuller from his Newfoundland employees. As early as late fall, 1905, for example, five men from his Cape Broyle station were “making \$60 a month” at Sechart.⁸⁷ The Hon. M.P. Cashin, major shareholder in that company, also arranged for an additional eight workers from Cape Broyle to go to British Columbia in July, 1906, for “\$50 per month and their passages paid to and from.”⁸⁸ When Cashin’s son, Peter, working his way across Canada, arrived in Victoria in 1911, the “brilliant man...was most courteous and kind” to him,⁸⁹ and gave him the “job as bookkeeper on the largest whale factory they had, located at Naden Harbour on Queen Charlotte Islands.”⁹⁰ Peter Cashin’s detailed account of the 1912 whaling season provides an excellent indication of the roles Newfoundlanders continued to play in British Columbia whaling. In addition to manager S.C. Ruck, who previously ran the Rose-au-Rue station in Newfoundland,

There were about forty men working on the main part of the plant who had been brought out there from Newfoundland. The head oil boiler was a Newfoundlander, the chief flenser was a Newfoundlander and the general foreman was also a Newfoundlander. Several of these men came from the district of Ferryland, others from St. John’s, and I had known many of them before I ever thought of coming to British Columbia.⁹¹

There were also “thirty or forty Japanese” and a similar number of Chinese, with each group having its own separate living and eating quarters.⁹²

The opportunities provided by the growing British Columbia industry helped offset the post-1905 decline in Newfoundland whaling. Skilled manpower was thus increasingly available for hire. In 1907, for example, the Pacific Whaling Company was prepared to pay “good wages” and “guarantee twelve months work” to a cooper of “sober habits,”⁹³ and that same year four men left for British Columbia, reportedly with “several years experience at that business [whaling] and without a doubt these are the men that are wanted out there.”⁹⁴ In 1908 George Reid and F. Elliott returned from British Columbia where, they reported, Dr. Rissmuller was “up to his eyes in business...and work [was] plentiful and times good.”⁹⁵ Three years later J. Thompson and J. Walsh, newcomers to the west coast industry, wrote to friends in Newfoundland that they were “perfectly satisfied with conditions of affairs as they exist in Victoria, B.C.”⁹⁶ Similarly, four ex-policemen from St. John’s wrote home in 1911 with “optimistic reports.” Although located on the “lonely” Queen Charlottes, they were paid extra for overtime, and as there was “nothing else to do,” they could earn “tall” money — as much as “\$75 a month,” whereas if they had stayed in the police force they would have been earning “only \$15.” There were “concerts and games,” they continued, to occupy “their spare moments.”⁹⁷

The rapidly declining Newfoundland industry and lack of alternative local employment meant that “whalemen” from Newfoundland could be hired for

virtually the same reason as Chinese and Japanese — they could be “secured at cheap rates.”⁹⁸ Consequently, as one observer commented, “In some of the eastern provinces they are called ‘North American Chinks’ because they are willing to work for such low wages.”⁹⁹ This was confirmed by S.D. Ruck, General Manager of the Victoria Whaling Company, in a letter to the Department of Immigration in Victoria, wherein he attempts to justify the hiring of non-Canadians. It reads, in part:

The four men who passed before you this morning are going to work on our whaling plants and there are another ten men to arrive, we understand, tomorrow. These men are all experienced in the whaling business and for the last ten years it has been our custom to employ a certain number of Newfoundlanders for our work as they are especially suited... We have no difficulty in getting Oriental labour for our business but we find it very difficult to get suitable white labour in this country and that is our reason for sending back to Newfoundland for men who have had previous experience in our business.¹⁰⁰

The company also now had a Newfoundland agent in Jas. Murphy and Sons, “Placentia’s Fastest Growing Store,”¹⁰¹ who in April, 1916, for example, received a “check each month for \$175.00 covering \$25.00 each from the following men: France [i.e., Francis] Mooney, Henery (sic) Mooney, John Green, Wm. Rowe, Ben Mooney, Wm. Judge, John Judge.”¹⁰² This represented half their monthly wages, and was to be given to their families in Placentia Bay. Problems occasionally arose, however; in early September, for instance, Murphy’s wrote to Victoria that

Mrs. Thomas Walsh (Rose) have been to see us tonight and says she haven’t received her July cheque yet, she is uneasy afraid the P.C. [i.e., paycheck] is lost. Her husband wrote her in May saying that the money would come direct from your office. Will you please see to it and let either us or her know if you have sent it.¹⁰³

The reply explained that there had been a delay because “Mr. Walsh neglected to make his endorsement of Payroll Draft before sending it to this office.”¹⁰⁴

An independent assessment of the nature and capabilities of Newfoundlanders in the British Columbia whaling industry is provided by a Victoria Whaling Company employee born and raised in that town. Donald B. MacPherson¹⁰⁵ recalls that the “old Newfie dialect ... could be heard along the Victoria waterfront seventy years ago [1915] among the sealers and whalers wintering here.” The majority of them, he claims, had two-year contracts, at \$50.00 a month “and found and lodging.” They were, he thought, “mostly cod fishers who [could] turn their hands to most anything, and willing too.” They were, however, “clannish as hell, but once you [got] their confidence and liking you will admire their hardiness...[their] willingness to pitch in ... and their wit.” Further, should “a seaman be required on any of the whalers ... one of these men would fit in and more than pull his weight ... [They are] always more than willing to lend a hand wherever needed, I have admired and respected them all of my life.”

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4. NEWFOUNDLAND WHALING VESSELS IN B.C.

Besides offering legislative guidelines, station models, equipment patents, and skilled personnel, the Newfoundland whaling industry also provided two catchers, the *St. Lawrence* and *Sebastian*.

The *St. Lawrence* (Fig. 9), was built in Christiania (Oslo) “for Dr. Rismuller’s (sic) factory at St. Lawrence” and arrived in St. John’s on October 6, 1903, “14 days from Norway, via Scotland.”¹⁰⁶ She was measured and surveyed prior to registration in St. John’s and found to be “111 tons gross, 28 tons net and will be under the British flag in future.”¹⁰⁷ By early November she was killing whales and keeping the factory at Little St. Lawrence “in full swing.”¹⁰⁸

The *St. Lawrence* operated along the south coast of Newfoundland until the fall of 1906. Captain Sprott Balcom was in St. John’s on October 5 of that year, reportedly interested in purchasing “one or more of the whalers” from the Newfoundland companies going into receivership as a consequence of continued decline in that industry.¹⁰⁹ Three days later, Rissmuller, now involved in British Columbia whaling for more than a year, sold the *St. Lawrence* “to parties in Canada.”¹¹⁰ She left St. John’s on October 23, 1906, sailed round Cape Horn, and arrived in Victoria on February 12, 1907.¹¹¹ She began whaling from Page’s Lagoon that fall, and moved north to the Cachalot station, established in Kyuquot Sound in 1907.¹¹² She captured 245 whales by the end of November, worth “over \$500,000 — a sum never before approached in the annals of whaling.”¹¹³ She continued to do well in 1908, when, having killed 318 whales from Kyuquot, she was reported as having “broke the world’s record.”¹¹⁴ She continued whaling until 1930, and was used for towing between 1931 and 1948.¹¹⁵

Rissmuller also arranged for the *Mic Mac* to work out of his Newfoundland factory at Little St. Lawrence,¹¹⁶ and in June, 1907, renamed her *Sebastian*.¹¹⁷ *Mic Mac* had been built in Christiania in 1904 for the Mic Mac Whaling Company, which had just completed a factory at Dublin Cove (Fig. 4). She arrived in St. John’s on April 21, 1904, following a “fearful time crossing,”¹¹⁸ began whaling in May, and continued until the Company was liquidated in 1907. Stocks had been by now so depleted that Rissmuller also decided to sell his Newfoundland station and sever all his ties with the local industry. The *Sebastian* was hired in 1909 by the Newfoundland government to carry passengers and mail around Fortune Bay¹¹⁹ prior to leaving for Victoria, British Columbia, where she arrived in March, 1910.¹²⁰ She hunted for the Pacific Whaling Company until 1916, when she was renamed *Saanich*; she was used for towing from 1916 to 1947.¹²¹ The establishment of the Western Whaling Company in 1948,¹²² however, provided another whaling opportunity for *Saanich*:

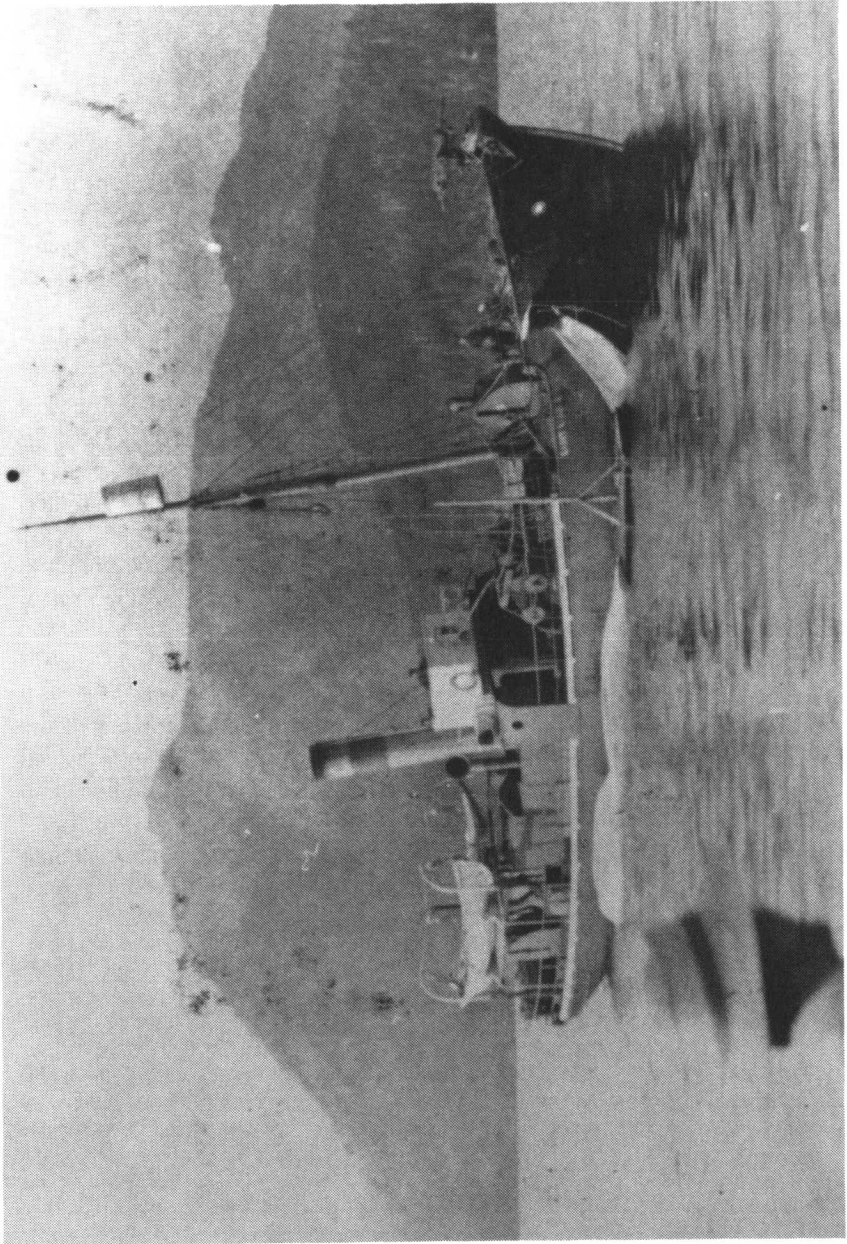


Figure 9. *St. Lawrence* – whale catcher .

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The third vessel, a ninety-three-foot towboat formerly used by the Coastal Towing Company, must have given senior whaler a sense of *déjà vu*, for it was none other than the Canadian North Pacific Fisheries chaser boat *Sebastian*, in its livery as the towboat *Saanich*. After a thirty-two-year hiatus it had returned to the whaling business.¹²³

5. CONCLUSION

The beginning of British Columbia whaling was but one stage in the global expansion of Norwegian dominated shore-station whaling. Its development coincided with the decline of the Newfoundland industry, and made use of available equipment, technology, and experienced personnel.

The growth of the west coast industry was facilitated by the presence in Victoria of a sealing company with strong east coast connections. One of its owners, Captain Sprott Balcom, was ideally placed in the late 1890s to be informed of Newfoundland whaling developments by family members in Halifax. Also of primary importance was the presence of Dr. Ludwig Rissmuller in Newfoundland, and his subsequent decision to join Balcom's Pacific Whaling Company. This entrepreneur had developed and patented equipment and procedures in Newfoundland which permitted whole carcass utilization. The adoption of a modified version of the 1902 Newfoundland Whaling Act by Ottawa in 1904 also necessitated the transfer of appropriate technologies.

Rissmuller was able to use his Newfoundland connections to recruit managers and skilled workers. These men and their families relocated to British Columbia and had a profound and lasting effect on the development of the Canadian west coast whaling industry. This was enhanced by further seasonal hirings. Two of Rissmuller's Newfoundland catchers, the *St. Lawrence* and *Sebastian*, were also brought out to British Columbia for long and distinguished careers. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the British Columbia whaling industry might not have developed as it did without this significant input from the declining Newfoundland shore-station whale fishery.

Acknowledgements

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Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Notes

¹See, for example, Ommanney, F.D., *Lost Leviathan*, London: Hutchinson and Co. Ltd., 1971, p. 69.

²See, for example, Tønnessen, J.N. and Johnsen, A.O., *The History of Modern Whaling*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982, pp. 16-54. Besides harpoon-cannons mounted on steam-powered catchers, modern whaling also required the development of winching apparatus capable of retrieving species which usually sank when dead.

³Webb, R.L., *West Whaling: A Brief History of Whale-hunting in the Pacific Northwest*, Vancouver: Vancouver Maritime Museum, 1984; and *On the Northwest: Commercial Whaling in the Pacific Northwest, 1790-1967*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988; Hagelund, W.A., *Whalers No More: A History of Whaling on the West Coast*, Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour Publishing, 1987; and Tønnessen and Johnsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-46.

⁴See, for example, Sanger, C.W. and Dickinson, A.B., "The Origins of Modern Shore Based Whaling in Newfoundland and Labrador: The Cabot Steam Whaling Co. Ltd., 1896-98," *International Journal of Maritime History*, 1 (1), June 1989, p. 131, and Dickinson, A.B. and Sanger, C.W., "Modern Shore-based Whaling in Newfoundland and Labrador: Expansion and Consolidation, 1898-1902," *International Journal of Maritime History*, 11 (1), June 1990, pp. 83-116.

⁵The industry peaked at eighteen stations in 1905.

⁶Balcom's eldest son, Lawrence H., quoted in Hagelund, *op. cit.*, p. 56. For details of the connections between the Balcom family in Halifax and Victoria, see Webb, *op. cit.* (1988), pp. 146-56; and Tønnessen and Johnsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-15.

⁷Webb, *op. cit.* (1988), p. 147.

⁸*Loc. cit.*

⁹Sanger and Dickinson, *op. cit.* (1989).

¹⁰Reprinted in *Evening Herald*, (St. John's), 5 August 1898.

¹¹Webb, *op. cit.* (1988), p. 147.

¹²"He engaged the interests of his old colleagues at the Victoria Sealing Company, particularly William Grant, who, like the Balcoms, had owned and commanded sealing schooners." *Ibid.*, p. 148.

¹³*Loc. cit.*

¹⁴Balcom's lawyer, R.E. Finn in Halifax, to J-R.F. Préfontaine, Canadian Minister of Marine and Fisheries, 11 July 1904 (University of British Columbia (U.B.C.): AW 15474 v.41).

¹⁵*Evening Herald*, 9 November 1903. On 15 July 1904, Balcom is listed as travelling on S.S. *Bruce*, from North Sydney, N.S., to Port-aux-Basques, but not on the passenger list for the train arriving in St. John's (*Daily News*, St. John's, 16 July 1904). He may only have travelled as far as Rissmuller's new station at Little St. Lawrence. Rissmuller was favourably disposed to receiving visitors (see, for example, Millais, J.G., *Newfoundland and Its Untrodden Ways*, London: Longmans, Green, 1907), and when he visited Balcom at Victoria in March 1905 it was at the invitation of "an old acquaintance" (*Evening Herald*, 30 March 1905).

¹⁶R.E. Finn to Préfontaine, 29 July 1904. U.B.C.: AW 15474 v.41.

¹⁷*Evening Herald*, 25 July 1904. These included Edward "Ned" Scaplen, a marine and mechanical engineer once heavily involved in constructing and operating Newfoundland whaling stations. Personal communication Mrs. Olive Miles (Scaplen's daughter), Victoria, 1990.

¹⁸*Daily News*, St. John's, 28 July 1904.

¹⁹*Evening Herald*, 22 July 1904. Charles Smith had been manager of the Dundee Sealing and Whaling Company operations in St. John's for many years. *Daily News*, 28 July 1904. The

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involvement of Scottish whaling companies in the Newfoundland seal fishery after 1862 is discussed in Sanger, C.W., "The 19th Century Newfoundland Seal Fishery and the Influence of Scottish Whalers," *Polar Record*, xx (1980), pp. 231-52; "The Dundee-St. John's Connection: Nineteenth Century Interlinkages Between Scottish Arctic Whaling and the Newfoundland Seal Fishery," *Newfoundland Studies*, 4(1), 1988, pp. 1-26; and "Changing Resources and Hunting Grounds of Scottish Whaling-Sealing Vessels in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 107(3), 1991, pp. 187-97. Smith briefly returned to St. John's from British Columbia in June 1905 where he was reported to have been "getting ready a new whaling factory for opening." *Evening Herald*, 20 June 1905.

²⁰A Mr. A. Johnson, of Sydney, N.S., for example, requested "rights" to whale along the Cape Breton coast. Préfontaine, in reply, noted that there had "been several applications for such, principally from Newfoundland." 14 November 1903. U.B.C.: AW 15474 v.41.

²¹*Evening Herald*, 23 September 1904.

²²*Loc. cit.*

²³See, for example, Préfontaine to A. Johnson, 14 November 1903. U.B.C. AW 15474 v.41. In response to a request for information from J. Pope, Under-secretary of State, F. Gourdeau, Deputy Minister, Marine and Fisheries, in a letter dated 26 November 1903, pointed out that the Minister "intends to introduce a Bill next season authorizing the licensing of whale factories, and following in many details, the system legalized in Newfoundland." U.B.C.: AW 15474 v.41.

²⁴Préfontaine to the Hon. W. Templeman, of Victoria, 15 October 1904, stated that "the legislation authorizing the licensing of Whale Fisheries was based largely upon that of Newfoundland, which was formulated after the business had been in operation there two years." U.B.C.: AW 15474 v.41.

²⁵There were minor differences; for example the annual licence fee in Newfoundland was initially \$1,500 and the Canadian Act specified that only harpoons and lines could be used in the hunt.

²⁶Tønnessen and Johnsen incorrectly state that "in a regulation couched in approximately the same terms as that for Newfoundland, the company included a provision to the effect that there was to be at least 100 miles between stations." *Op. cit.*, p. 115.

²⁷Webb incorrectly states that the Newfoundland Act did not restrict the number of catchers to one per station. *Op. cit.* (1988), p. 151. This is probably based on the fact that the Cabot Steam Whaling Co. Ltd. had already purchased a second vessel prior to passage of the legislation and was thus permitted an exemption.

²⁸For discussion of the Newfoundland Act, see Dickinson and Sanger, *op. cit.*; and for the Canadian Act, Webb, *op. cit.* (1988), pp. 148-51.

²⁹The Newfoundland Department of Fisheries cautioned against further expansion in 1903, recommending that the Fishery Board limit the number of licences and further recommended that "in construing the fifty mile clause of the Whaling Act of 1902, that a restricted constriction be put on the same. In Norway, owing to unrestricted killing, the whale fishery was depleted in fourteen years. This experience should be a guiding light to Newfoundland in the path of prudence." *Annual Fisheries Report* (Newfoundland, 1903), p. 9. This warning went unheeded, however, and as predicted the industry declined rapidly until operations temporarily stopped after the 1916 season. *Evening Herald*, 27 November 1916. Whaling continued only sporadically thereafter until 1972, when the Government of Canada prohibited commercial hunting. Tønnessen and Johnsen, *op. cit.*, p. 323.

³⁰Webb describes how Sprott Balcom and partners used these regulations to develop in effect a whaling monopoly. *Op. cit.* (1988). Correspondence between the Pacific Whaling Company and the Government of Canada can be seen at the Public Archives of Canada, or U.B.C.: AW 15474 v.41.

³¹Webb, *op. cit.* (1988), p. 151.

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³²Victoria *Colonist*, 16 November 1916. Carried by the St. John's *Evening Herald*, 24 November 1916.

³³Tønnessen and Johnsen, *op. cit.*, p. 105; and Webb, *op. cit.* (1988), p. 156. Both appear to rely upon J.G. Millais' reference to Rissmuller as a "German-American scientist" following a visit with him at his Little St. Lawrence station in 1904. *Op. cit.*

³⁴Webb, *op. cit.* (1988), p. 158.

³⁵Part of his estate was left "to Dr. Julius, who lived in Germany." *Evening Herald*, 24 November 1916.

³⁶Rissmuller's wife, Pauline, claimed after his death that her father "was one of the richest men in New York." *Loc. cit.*

³⁷Webb records that "he was a traveller who provided transient addresses on important legal documents." *Op. cit.* (1988), p. 158.

³⁸*Evening Herald*, 28 August 1899; and Sanger and Dickinson, *op. cit.* (1989).

³⁹The original Newfoundland whaling station which had begun operations two years previously. Sanger and Dickinson, *ibid.* (1989).

⁴⁰McCourt, B., *The Story of the Whale* (Pacific Whaling Company, n.d.), p. 8. Reported in Webb, *op. cit.* (1988), p. 157.

⁴¹Brown, P.W., *Where the Fishers Go: The Story of Labrador*, Toronto: The Musson Book Company Limited, 1909, p. 168.

⁴²Sanger and Dickinson, *op. cit.* (1989).

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 152.

⁴⁴*Evening Herald*, 19 August and 7 December 1901.

⁴⁵Others were less impressed. Olive Miles, a seven year old when Rissmuller visited Page's Lagoon in the winter of 1907-08, recalled him as "being proper." Personal Communication, Victoria, 1990. Lawrence Balcom thought "he was the biggest blowhard of all, had more wild ideas. Always trying to promote something." Hagelund, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁴⁶*Evening Telegram*, St. John's, 28 May 1902.

⁴⁷"Dr. Rismuller [sic] has started in to manufacture oil at Balaena from the offal carcasses of the whales taken there treating them chemically and being highly successful in procuring good liquid." *Evening Herald*, 31 May 1902. His new guano factory at Rose-au-Rue (Fig. 4) was "in full operation" with the whales "being put through processes which convert them into an excellent fertilizer." *Ibid.*, 13 August 1902. The plant was subsequently "operating full blast, the machinery is working splendidly." *Ibid.*, 8 September 1902.

⁴⁸Webb erroneously refers to Cape Broyle as "Cape Royal." *Op. cit.* (1988), p. 157.

⁴⁹*Evening Herald*, 29 September 1902.

⁵⁰Charles O'Neil Conroy, solicitor for the Colonial Manufacturing Company, to T.J. Murphy, Newfoundland Minister of Marine and Fisheries, 18 November 1902. Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador.

⁵¹*Evening Herald*, 24 November 1916.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 8 April 1903.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 18 July 1903.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 9 November 1903.

⁵⁵Millais, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

⁵⁶Webb discusses these patents. *Op. cit.* (1988), pp. 158-61.

⁵⁷Catches and profits were already declining prior to reaching maximum station number in 1905. Sanger, C.W. and Dickinson, A.B., "Expansion of Regulated Modern Shore-Station Whaling in Newfoundland and Labrador, 1902-03," *Northern Mariner*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1991, pp. 1-22.

⁵⁸Sworn before a Notary Public in Ottawa, 6 January 1905. U.B.C.: AW 15474 v.41. Seven months later, Rissmuller also unsuccessfully negotiated with French authorities to relocate his Little St. Lawrence factory to St. Pierre in return for a 20-year license monopoly. *Evening Herald*, 16 August 1905.

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⁵⁹Webb, *op. cit.* (1988), p. 156.

⁶⁰*Evening Herald*, 13 December 1905. This was Rissmuller's second visit that year, he was at Sechart just before it opened at the invitation of "owner", Sprott Balcom, "who is an old acquaintance." *Ibid.*, 30 March 1905.

⁶¹Webb, *op. cit.* (1988), p. 157.

⁶²Correspondence with R.P. Venning, Asst. Commissioner of Fisheries, 2 September 1907. U.B.C.: AW 15474 v.41. This has been accepted as fact by subsequent observers. Tønnessen and Johnsen, for example, incorrectly claimed that "when he came to Newfoundland (in 1900) the whaling industry was not in a favourable state and was showing no profit, but once Rismuller [sic] entered the business, things soon changed." *Op. cit.*, p. 106. Similarly, Webb contends that the "'Rissmuller Patented Whale Reduction Process' appears to have been the only means of meeting Ottawa's stringent processing prerequisite." *Op. cit.* (1988), p. 161.

⁶³By 1910 Sprott Balcom had either co-opted or outmanoeuvred would-be competitors, and built up an effective monopoly on British Columbia whaling. With financial backing from the Canadian Northern Railway, he formed The Canadian North Pacific Fisheries Ltd. and immediately purchased five new catchers, began construction of new stations at Rose Harbour and Naden Harbour on the Queen Charlotte Islands and Bay City, Washington state (Fig. 5). The events leading to Balcom's control of west coast whaling are analyzed by Webb, *op. cit.* (1988). Other insights are provided by Hagelund, *op. cit.*; and Tønnessen and Johnsen, *op. cit.*

⁶⁴Webb, *op. cit.* (1988), p. 180. In 1909 Sprott Balcom was listed as Managing Director, and Dr. L. Rissmuller as Director. British Columbia Provincial Archives (B.C.P.A.) AD MSS. 21, v. 2, Fol. 1-4. The *Evening Herald* lists officers in the new whaling company as: Dr. Ludwig Rissmuller, Vice-President and General Manager; with Captain Sprott Balcom as Second Vice-President. 20 December 1910.

⁶⁵Rissmuller "pursued his dream of an American whaling company by securing, through a holding company in Seattle, a site at Westport in Gray's Harbour." Hagelund, *op. cit.*, p. 48., and Webb, *op. cit.* (1988), p. 189.

⁶⁶Victoria *Colonist*, 16 November 1916, and St. John's *Evening Herald*, 24 November 1916.

⁶⁷Goddard, J., "Reminiscences of Life on the Shore Whaling Stations of British Columbia, 1905-1918," in Foster, J.W. and Smith, S.O. (eds.), *Archaeology in Solution: Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Conference on Underwater Archaeology*, Sacramento, California, 1986, p. 209.

⁶⁸Victoria *Colonist*, 30 November 1905.

⁶⁹J. Goddard, Personal Correspondence, 11 January 1991. Goddard also describes Scaplen's early involvement in the British Columbia whaling industry in a taped interview with one of his daughters, Mrs. Olive Miles. B.C.P.A., 3945:1. Mrs. Miles' father was "a civil and marine engineer." Information confirmed, Personal Communication, Victoria, 1990.

⁷⁰See Reference Note 19 and, for example, *Evening Herald*, 28 July 1904, and Webb, *op. cit.* (1988), p. 150.

⁷¹See, for example, *Evening Herald*, 6 March and 5 May 1903. Smith was "connected with various whale factories" in Newfoundland, including the new Dublin Cove station (Fig. 4). *Ibid.*, 5 May 1903. It was estimated that by 1903 "all Dr. Rismuller's [sic] factories will have the same kind of machinery installed." *Ibid.*, 6 March 1903. Scaplen had installed hot air dryers at Rissmuller's Cape Broyle factory. *Loc. cit.*

⁷²Webb, *op. cit.*, (1988), pp. 156-69.

⁷³Goddard, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

⁷⁴Huswick, A., "The War on the Whale: Part II - The Business End of Whaling," *British Columbia Magazine*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1912, p. 10.

⁷⁵*Evening Herald*, 6 March 1903.

⁷⁶He had also been manager of the station at Riverhead, St. Mary's Bay, Newfoundland until it closed. Details of Gosney's move to British Columbia are in Goddard's taped interview with his daughter, Nellie Marmo. B.C.P.A. 3945.

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⁷⁷In 1911 Major Peter Cashin, working at various jobs in western Canada as a youth, visited his "old friend 'Dickie' Carrol...[who]...was working in a very responsible position with Dr. Rissmuller in the whaling company." Cashin, Major P., *My Life and Times, 1880-1919*, St. John's, Nfld.: Breakwater Books Limited, 1976, p. 139.

⁷⁸*Evening Herald*, 17 May 1909.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 26 January 1911.

⁸⁰Webb, *op. cit.* (1988), p. 237.

⁸¹Le Marquand's involvement with Newfoundland and British Columbia whaling is further described in Goddard's taped interview with his son, Alan Le Marquand. B.C.P.A., 3945:7, 8 and 9.

⁸²S.C. Ruck was general manager, while station managers for Bay City, Kyuquot and Naden Harbour were listed as G. Le Marquand, C.E. Ruck and A. Gosney, respectively. Vancouver Maritime Museum, Box 2. Rose Harbour opened late in 1916 with William Rolls, manager - also from Newfoundland. J. Goddard, Personal Correspondence, 11 January 1991.

⁸³Goddard, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

⁸⁴*Loc. cit.*

⁸⁵Personal communication, Victoria, 1990.

⁸⁶Hagelund, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

⁸⁷*Evening Herald*, 4 August 1906.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 31 July 1906.

⁸⁹Cashin, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁹²*Loc. cit.* Goddard, *op. cit.*, and Webb, *op. cit.* (1988), describe life on the British Columbia stations prior to World War 1.

⁹³*Evening Herald*, 8 July 1907.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 30 July 1907.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 11 August 1908.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 3 May 1911.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 26 August 1911.

⁹⁸Goddard, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

⁹⁹MacPherson, D.B., Typescript (n.d.), B.C.P.A.

¹⁰⁰6 April 1916. Vancouver Maritime Museum, Whaling Box 2.

¹⁰¹Company letterhead in 1916. Vancouver Maritime Museum, Whaling Box 2.

¹⁰²Letter from Jas. Murphy and Sons to Victoria Whaling Co. Ltd., 17 May 1916. Vancouver Maritime Museum, Whaling Box 2.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 11 September 1916.

¹⁰⁴Letter from Victoria Whaling Company Ltd. to Jas. Murphy and Sons, 21 September 1916. Vancouver Maritime Museum, Whaling Box 2.

¹⁰⁵MacPherson, D.B. MS typescript, February 1985, n.p. B.C.P.A.

¹⁰⁶*Evening Herald*, 6 October 1903.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 7 October 1903.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 9 November 1903.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 5 October 1906.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 8 October 1906.

¹¹¹Tønnessen and Johnsen incorrectly state that *St. Lawrence* sailed directly from Norway and had not previously been involved in the Newfoundland whale fishery. *Op. cit.*, p. 116. The voyage is described in the *Evening Herald*, 23 October, 10 and 28 November, 24 December 1906, 4 and 12 February 1907.

¹¹²The long association of *St. Lawrence* with west coast whaling is described in Hagelund, *op. cit.*; Tønnessen and Johnsen, *op. cit.*; and Webb, *op. cit.* (1988).

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¹¹³*Evening Herald*, 25 November 1907.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 26 November 1908.

¹¹⁵Hagelund, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

¹¹⁶See, for example, *Evening Herald*, 12 February and 15 March 1907.

¹¹⁷*Evening Herald*, 11 June 1907. Hagelund records her only as *Sebastian* in Newfoundland. *Op. cit.*, p. 198.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 25 April 1904.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 28 October 1909.

¹²⁰*Sebastian's* voyage round Cape Horn is described in the *Evening Herald*, 30 November and 2 December 1909; 15 and 22 January, 1 and 17 February, and 15 and 22 March 1910.

¹²¹Hagelund, *op. cit.*, p. 198. *Sebastian* was sold to the Canadian Northern Railway which converted her into a towboat. Webb, *op. cit.* (1988), p. 226.

¹²²Webb, *ibid.*, (1988), p. 259.

¹²³*Ibid.*, p. 261.