

\$5.00

Dancing on the Belly of the Shark and Other Adventures on Monterey Bay

by Tim Thomas



MHA MONTEREY
HISTORY &
ART association



BILL OF FARE

COCKTAILS

Oyster	-	-	-	30c	Crab	-	-	-	30c
Lobster	-	-	-	40c	Shrimp	-	-	-	30c

SOUPS

Abalone Chowder	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25c
Abalone Nectar	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25c
Clam Chowder	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25c

SALADS

Crab Salad	-	-	75	Crab Louis	-	-	75c
Lobster Salad	-	-	75c	Lobster Louis	-	-	90c
Shrimp Salad	-	-	60c	Sliced Tomatoes	-	-	20c
Lettuce and Tomatoes	-	-	20c	Lettuce	-	15c; (two)	25c

FISH

Fresh Daily

Filet of Abalone, Tartar Sauce	-	-	-	-	1.00
Lobster, Tartar Sauce	-	-	-	75c and \$1.00	
Filet of Sole, Tartar Sauce	-	65	Cracked Crab	-	60
Oysters, fried or stewed	-	75	Halibut	-	65
Mackerel	-	65	Sea Bass	-	65
Salmon	-	65	Rockcod	-	65
Sandabs	-	65	Scallops	-	65

POTATOES

French Fried	-	-	-	-	-	15c; (two)	25c
Julienne	-	-	-	15c	Lyonnaise	-	20c
Saute Hashed Brown	-	-	-	-	-	-	20c

DESSERTS

French Pancake	-	-	50c	With Rum	-	-	75c
Rum Omelette	-	-	-	-	-	-	75c

BEVERAGES

Coffee	-	10c	Tea (pot)	-	15c	Milk	-	10c
A Single Portion Served for Two Persons				-	-	25c Extra Charge		

Front cover: detail of the two-sided menu created by Jo Mora for Pop Ernest's Abalone and Seafood Restaurant, late 1920s.

Above: mid-1920's prices from the same menu: 6 courses for \$3.00!

Centerfold: full menu cover.

Back cover: Monterey whaling boat attributed to Charles Scamon, 1874, digitally reversed and colorized by John Castagna.

NOTICIAS del Puerto de Monterey

Quarterly Bulletin of the
Monterey History and Art Association



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*Special support for this publication comes from the
J.B. Phillips Historical Fisheries Project*



Whitey Arbo poised to harpoon a basking shark from his specially designed platform aboard the Opal in April of 1948. J.B. Phillips photograph, MHAA.

DANCING ON THE BELLY OF THE SHARK AND OTHER ADVENTURES ON MONTEREY BAY

By Tim Thomas, Historian
Monterey History & Art Association

IN MEMORY OF TOM FORDHAM
MASTER MODEL-MAKER, HISTORIAN, FRIEND
1933-2004

He stood at the bow of the forty-foot abalone boat, the Pop Ernest, harpoon in hand, arm at the ready. The craft was cruising near the mouth of the Salinas River, about a quarter mile offshore. The retired Portuguese whaler beside him coached him on exactly how to throw the harpoon when the time came.

Just then, a fin appeared about twenty yards off the port bow. As the boat edged closer, everyone on board could clearly see the slow-moving basking shark sunning itself on the shimmering surface of Monterey Bay—all thirty feet of it. The amateur harpoonist struggled to steady himself against a sudden ground swell.

Without warning, the huge creature started to sound and the old whaler yelled “BALEIA! Throw the harpoon!” The harpoonist threw the iron with all his might, striking the top of the shark’s head. As the shark continued its dive, desperately trying to swim out of reach, the surrounding water began to turn bright red.

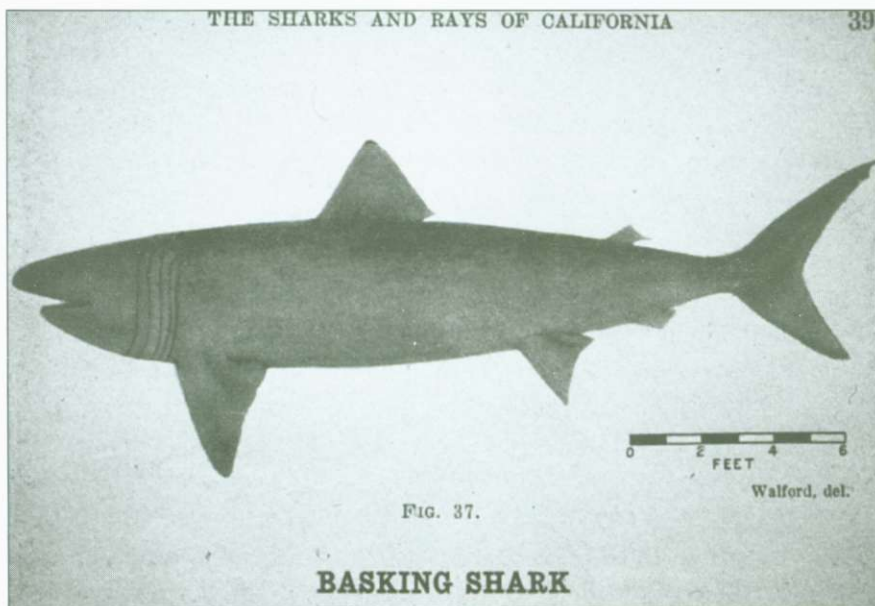
Quickly, the harpoonist and the old whaler jumped out of the way. They didn’t want to be pulled overboard by the 280-foot rope now racing through the cleats, one end attached to the boat and the other to the harpoon embedded in the shark’s flesh. Whenever it tried to dive toward the bottom, two empty fifty-gallon barrels, attached to the rope for buoyancy, kept forcing the creature to surface. The shark was so strong that it towed the boat several yards before slowing down.

As the boat pulled up alongside the wounded giant, a crew member brought out a shotgun and put it out of its misery. The prize was won, and the boat set out again. It was time for another sportsman to try his skill with the harpoon.

What is a Basking Shark?

Between 1924 and 1952, this scenario was repeated almost annually in Monterey Bay because, during those three decades, basking sharks were frequent visitors. This gentle giant is easily recognized by its enormous size (it is the second-largest fish in existence; only the whale shark is larger) and by the extremely large gill slits that almost completely encircle its head. Mature specimens regularly reach twenty-five feet in length and in some cases exceed thirty. Rare reports describe basking sharks as long as fifty feet.

These plankton-eating filter-feeders swim slowly but powerfully at a constant speed near the surface of the water. They are known as basking or sun sharks because, staying so close to the surface, they appear to be “basking” or “sunning” themselves. In fact, they are completely dependent on a constant flow of water in order to ingest their food. Some studies suggest that as many as 1,800 *tons* of water pass through the mouth of a basking shark every hour.



Basking shark illustration reproduced in a California Fish and Game publication by William Ripley, 1948.

The Whalers

In the mid 1850s, a small whale fishery developed in Monterey, largely made up of professional whalers from the Azores Islands off the coast of Portugal. Recruited by the captains of New Bedford or Nantucket deep-water whaling vessels, for voyages of between two and five years, many of these expert whalers found themselves stranded in California by the gold rush. Unlucky in the mines and unable to find a homeward-bound ship, a number made their way to Monterey because it looked like home and a good spot for shore whaling.

By 1870, at least four whaling companies were operating on the bay, landing mostly grays and humpbacks. After harpooning these giants from their small, 28-foot boats, the whalers would often be towed around the bay for hours at a time, until the wounded creature began to tire. Locals would line up along the coast to watch the spectacle called a “Nantucket sleighride.”



*Drawing of Monterey whaling boat attributed to Charles Scamon, 1874.
MHAA Collection.*

After the exhausted leviathan had finally been put to death, it would usually sink. The whalers would place a marker on the spot. About ten days later, the whale would surface and the whalers would sail out to retrieve it and tow it ashore, where they would strip off the blubber and render it into oil. The flensed carcasses were towed out to sea, but their submersion was only temporary, and the high tide left many whale skeletons stranded on Monterey's sandy beaches.

In order to keep up their harpooning skills, the whalers often harpooned basking sharks when they appeared in the bay. The carcasses were usually left to rot on the water, but occasionally the whalers would bring them ashore to process the oil from the livers. These organs might weigh as much as 2500 pounds and contain between 200-400 gallons of oil, which was marketed primarily for use in lamps. By 1875, the shore whaling industry in Monterey was in decline, not because too many whales had been captured, but because the development of other products, especially kerosene, had reduced the demand for whale oil.

The Fish King, the Abalone King, and Japanese Hard-Hat Divers

One day in 1908, a Monterey fisherman named Luis Perez, known locally as the "Fish King," was out catching rockfish when he accidentally brought in a small basking shark. Perez hauled this strange animal to the Monterey Wharf where his enterprising friend Luis Duarte (brother of Manuel Duarte, owner of a pioneering tourist shop) figured they could make some money off it.

The two men erected a small tent on the beach next to the Monterey Wharf, placed the dead shark inside it, and began charging 50 cents—a pretty good sum at the time—to anyone who wanted to take a peek. According the *Monterey Daily Cypress*, the pair sold shark-viewing tickets for ten days before disposing of what by then would have become a very malodorous carcass.

The German-born chef Otto Ernest Dolter, who would become widely known locally as "Pop Ernst," first came to Monterey in 1906, where he opened a small, European-style restaurant called



*Manuel Duarte's store in the late 1890s: "Pioneer Boat House and Maritime Museum." Note whale jaw bone at right, other whale bone objects at left.
MHAA Collection*

Café Ernest on Alvarado Street. It was at this location that he first experimented with the local red abalone, developing a method for tenderizing the foot prior to cooking. His recipe elevated the dish from "rubber boot" to epicurean delight and made Café Ernest a very popular establishment. In 1919, Pop moved the restaurant to larger quarters at Fishermen's Wharf, adjacent to the beach. The new location became a favorite stop for rich and famous sojourners at the Hotel Del Monte.

In the summer of 1924, Pop Ernest teamed up with blacksmith Henry Leppert to develop some creative new advertising for the restaurant while making some extra money on the side. Henry Leppert was a Monterey native of French parentage, born during the latter part of the 19th century. As a young man, he apprenticed with a local blacksmith and opened his own smithy shop while still in his teens.

Henry did a lot of business with Monterey's Japanese-run abalone industry, making diving shoes, abalone pries, and knives for these pioneers of hard-hat diving. After the United States imposed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, banning the



A captured basking shark on Del Monte Beach draws a crowd. Luis Perez may be at far right. Charles Hedrick photo circa 1910. MHAA Collection.

immigration of Chinese laborers and prohibiting those already here from becoming naturalized citizens, Japanese immigration to the West Coast increased markedly.

One of those immigrants, Otosaburo Noda, arrived in 1895 and soon noticed the abundance of red abalone, a prized delicacy in his native country. Amazed that no one was utilizing this resource, Noda founded a small fishing colony of men from Wakayama, Japan. His letter to the Japanese Agriculture and Commerce Department prompted the arrival of a young marine biologist, Gennosuke Kodani, who started a small abalone fishery in Pacific Grove in 1897, using *ama* (free divers) to harvest the abalone, which was subsequently dried and shipped to Japan. A year later, Kodani moved his operation to Point Lobos. From 1895 to 1915, the Japanese dominated the entire Monterey Bay fishing industry. Their predominance in the abalone industry lasted until 1941.

It was this abalone connection that first introduced Henry Leppert to Pop Ernest. In the summer of 1924, the pair hatched the idea of taking Hotel Del Monte guests out on Pop's brand new 40-foot abalone boat, the *Pop Ernest*, where—for fifty cents—they could try their skill at harpooning a basking shark.

For some unknown reason, beginning in the early 1920s, basking sharks started visiting Monterey Bay in large numbers, sometimes in the hundreds. These schools were a nuisance to

fishermen because the sharks often got tangled in their nets. There was no market for basking sharks when Pop and Henry came up with the idea of taking tourists out to harpoon them for sport. A number of retired Portuguese whalers were still living in the area, and Pop arranged to have some of them come out on his boat to tell their tales of whaling on the Monterey Bay and demonstrate how to throw the harpoon.

At first, the novices used an old harpoon that Pop had picked up at Point Lobos. The schooner it came from—once used to smuggle Chinese laborers into California—had burned some years before in Whalers' Cove. Later, when Henry began making his own harpoons, demand increased because his were considered to be the best.

Initially, the pair advertised this fishing adventure exclusively through the Hotel Del Monte, where it was a big hit, attracting ordinary guests as well as many well-known writers, artists, and celebrities—among them the nationally known fiction writers Irvin Cobb and Gouverneur

*Advertisement for Henry Leppert's wrought iron artistry, 1927.
Courtesy of Kent Seavey.*



Phillips Lewis, a student of leading Monterey artist Armin Hansen, took this dramatically angled, deep-focus photograph circa 1913. MHAA Collection.

HENRY LEPPERT

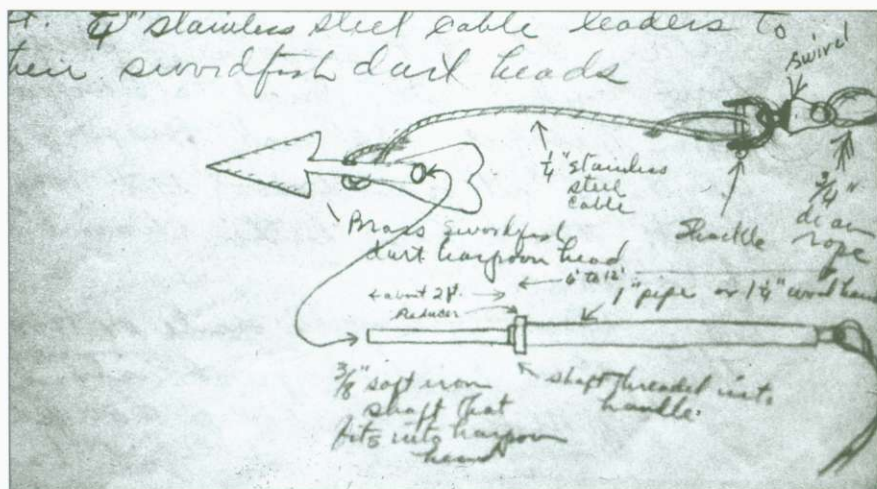
MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA



Wrought Iron Window Grille

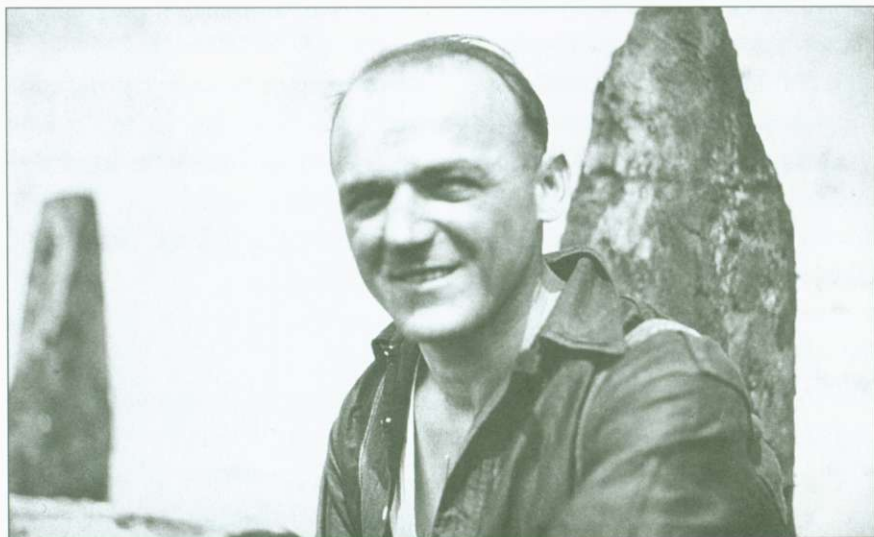
Artistic execution of all varieties of ornamental wrought iron.

All work personally supervised by Mr. Henry Leppert.



This page of notes by marine biologist J.B. Phillips includes his sketch of a harpoon. J.B. Phillips Collection, MHAA.

Morris. The Morrises had moved to Monterey from Hollywood in 1922. Even royalty got into the act, including Count Carzelle of Rome and Lord and Lady Hastings of Great Britain. The English couple were guests of Gouverneur and Ruth Wight Morris at their restored Casa Castro, on the Mesa overlooking the bay. Other local sportsmen also came on board regularly, including S.F.B.



Henry Leppert in 1924, the year that he and Pop Ernest started their basking shark enterprise. MHAA Collection, photographer unknown.



Labeled photograph of "Monterey abalone launch with live boxes on stern" at Wharf #2, October 15, 1930. J.B. Phillips Collection, MHAA.

Morse, president of Del Monte Properties Company, and artist Jo Mora. Jo and his son Jo Jr., who was sixteen years old in 1924, were both avid hunters who enjoyed the excitement of the basking shark excursions. Jo Sr., who had started out as an illustrator, was always happy to barter his skills if the deal was right. He designed a whimsical menu cover for the Pop Ernest Abalone and Seafood Restaurant (see centerfold) in exchange for free basking shark trips and free abalone dinners.

Since the main function of the *Pop Ernest* was collecting abalone, an air compressor was kept on board for the divers. After a basking shark had been harpooned and killed, Henry Leppert would sometimes pump the carcass full of air and spin it until it turned belly-up. Then he would climb out onto the dead shark's belly and do a little dance for the passengers, who always said it was the highlight of their trip.

Thomas Machado

By 1925, other companies began offering basking shark hunts on the bay—in particular, the *Two Brothers*, a converted 50-foot Navy motor-sailor that could carry more passengers per trip. Although its owner-operators Bert Korf and Chester Gilkey didn't

provide old whalers as coaches, they did have Thomas Machado, son and grandson of Monterey-based Portuguese whalers, and they only charged twenty-five cents to harpoon a basking shark.

Because this was a tourist-generated industry, boat-owners were always looking for new ways to entertain their customers. From time to time, *Two Brothers* crew members would jump on the shark and ride it like a bucking bronco at the rodeo. Unfortunately, basking shark skin has a very rough surface, almost like little teeth, that usually tore up the rider's legs.

Thomas Machado was born in Monterey. Both his father and grandfather were whalers, but by the time Thomas came of age, the whaling industry had come to an end. The opportunity to be part of the basking shark fishery enabled him to continue the family tradition. The first to harpoon basking sharks systematically, he was considered by far the best harpoonist working on the bay. He still holds the record for the largest shark ever caught: 8600 pounds, including a liver weighing 2100 pounds, caught in 1931. One day in 1947, he set another record by harpooning six basking sharks in 2½ hours off Del Monte Beach, all with the same harpoon. The expert Machado continued fishing basking sharks into the 1950s.



A basking shark boat similar to the Two Brothers. Note harpoons, rigging, and flotation barrels in stern. J.B. Phillips photograph, MHAA Collection.

Money to be Made

When this fishery first began in 1924, it was strictly for sport, and the usual practice was to leave the dead shark out on the water, at the mercy of the elements. Beginning in 1927, however, a new player came onto the scene. Max Schaefer, owner of a small plant out in the sand dunes at Seaside, was in the reduction business. Reduction is a process that renders animal offal and other waste products into fertilizer, oil, meal and animal feed. The process was simple and extremely profitable, requiring less than five employees to run the plant. Schaefer began working with the sardine industry, buying whole fish from the fishermen. Prior to 1929, there was no “official” sardine season; sardines were fished whenever they came into the bay.

Schaefer’s primary market was the chicken industry; he produced cheap chicken feed from the offal of Monterey sardines. Prior to 1920, the chicken industry in California was hardly thriving. People didn’t eat chicken as frequently as we do today because it was too expensive. When reduction plants began producing cheap chicken feed out of the Monterey sardine catch, the poultry industry took off, producing more chickens at lower cost. As Bill Ripley, a prominent biologist of the day, aptly observed, “The California chicken industry owes its life to the bones of the Monterey sardine.”

Schaefer, who couldn’t help but notice all the basking shark activity, figured he could do something with them too. He began buying the carcasses with a view to grinding them up for dog and cat food. He also used the oil from the livers to produce “Sun Shark Liver Oil: Nature’s Own Tonic.” Although basking shark liver oil contains relatively low-grade vitamin A and really isn’t good for much, Schaefer’s brochure credited it with a host of virtues:

A tonic to build up the digestive system, enabling it to get out all nutrients contained in regular food... [Gives] relief in cases of neuritis, stomach ulcers, anemia, loss of appetite and weight, lack of energy, and asthmatic attacks. Has also

~SUN~ SHARK LIVER OIL



Nature's Own Tonic



M. N. SCHAEFER

PRODUCER

SEASIDE, CALIFORNIA

in several cases reduced and finally eliminated the growth of goiters. It promotes health and growth in children, builds up resistance to attacks of the usual ailments of youth, and furnishes energy for strenuous exertions...In older people it [defers] troubles common with age [and] enables them to keep on enjoying their full bodily vigor and energy.

The tonic sold very well. Perceiving that there was money to be made, several basking shark fishermen were soon working the bay. Initially, Schaefer paid ten dollars a

ton, but by 1933, he had to shell out double that amount. Considering

that a basking shark can weigh as much as 8000 pounds, and that it was possible to bring in more than one a day, fortunate fishermen could make pretty good money. This operation continued until 1938, when Schaefer's reduction plant burned to the ground and he opted not to rebuild it.

*Cover of Schaefer's promotional brochure.
MHAA Collection*



Basking shark fisherman Jack Daniels and Bill Tomlinson pose at Hopkins Marine Station Beach in 1952 with a great white shark. These predators often trailed wounded basking sharks. A notation on the back of the photo reads, "The citizens of Pacific Grove gave these men \$50 for bringing in this shark." MHAA Collection.

Hurray for Hollywood

In mid-February of 1933, United Artists Film Company was poised to begin shooting *I Cover the Waterfront*, directed by James Cruze and starring Claudette Colbert, Ben Lyons and Ernest Torrence. The story centers on a waterfront journalist (Lyons) who stumbles on a group of tuna fishermen smuggling Chinese laborers into California in the bellies of sharks.

The company heard about the Monterey basking shark fishery and sent a camera crew northward. The crew hired Thomas Machado and chartered Monterey sardine fishermen Sal Colletto's purse seiner, the *Dante Alighieri*. Sal negotiated \$200 per day for the use of his sardine boat and crew, very good money during the Depression.

The first day of filming made a lasting impression on Sal, who had never fished basking sharks before: "It was a calm day and we headed for Moss Landing. When we were opposite the Salinas River, as far as your eyes could see there were fins of basking sharks, ranging from twenty to thirty feet in length and weighing from four to seven tons apiece."

COMPLIMENTS
OF
POP ERNEST



ABALONE AND SEAFOOD
RESTAURANT
MONTEREY CAL.
AUF WIEDER SEHEN

Thomas Machado climbed into the *Dante's* small skiff along with Sal's brother Vincent. They slowly rowed up to a shark and Thomas, standing at the bow, harpooned it. According to Sal:

When the fish was hit, it splashed its tail and struck the little row boat, dunking both men in among the school of sharks. We picked the men up quickly, then went after the floating barrel. The shark went straight down and lay alive in about fifteen fathoms depth. We grabbed the barrel and put the rope on the winch to raise the shark to the surface. He did not give much of a fight. We tied a sling to his tail and raised him aboard by winch. He weighed about four tons.

During the course of that day, they filmed several basking shark hunts. One of the most remarkable sequences involved a forty-five-foot, eight-ton shark. After it was harpooned, it pulled the skiff with Thomas and Vincent aboard back and forth for an hour. According to Sal, "Upon hoisting the shark above the water line, the weight of the fish tilted the boat. Then the tail snapped off the fish and sank to the bottom of the sea.

The film company had shot so many scenes involving the *Dante Alighieri* that they asked Sal if he would sail his boat down to San Pedro for use during the rest of the filming. Thinking that this would be more easy money, Sal readily agreed, sardine season having ended a few weeks earlier. It took him thirty-six hours to get from Monterey to San Pedro with two sharks aboard, then he and his crew had to remain in Hollywood for about three weeks.

The crew was anxiously awaiting their pay and Sal was looking forward to receiving the movie money, which by this time amounted to the dazzling sum of \$4500. The day finally came for him to go to the studio and pick up his check, but it was late in the afternoon, too late to take it to the bank. Rising bright and early the next morning, Sal headed for the nearest bank, only to find it closed. The date happened to be March 6, 1933, the day that President Roosevelt ordered all the banks closed from coast to coast.

The final cut of *I Cover the Waterfront* includes only a few minutes of the basking shark hunt, but is worth the viewing for that sequence alone. It is remarkable to see Thomas Machado, son and grandson of Monterey's Portuguese whalers, harpooning that huge shark. The sequence is as close as we will ever come to witnessing a nineteenth-century whale hunt on Monterey Bay.

The End of an Era

By 1938, when Max Schaefer's reduction plant burned down, the number of basking sharks in Monterey Bay had begun to decrease for reasons no one really understands. Also, demand had switched from basking to soupfin sharks.

By 1939, war had broken out across Europe and German submarines stalked Atlantic waters. As a consequence, East Coast cod fishermen couldn't fish. Codfish was the primary source for vitamin A. (Some readers will remember with a grimace having to swallow cod liver oil by the spoonful as children.) In addition to domestic uses, demand from the U.S. military was high.

A few years earlier, a scientist working for the Booth Cannery in Monterey had discovered that soupfin shark livers contained very high quality vitamin A. Although the soupfin is much smaller than the basking shark, and its liver weighs only from five to twenty pounds, the oil was in such high demand that, by 1941, good soupfin fishermen could make as much as \$150,000 in a single catch! This bonanza, locally referred to as a "second gold rush," meant that—for the most part—the basking shark was left alone.

The Fishery Revived

In April of 1948, Moss Landing fisherman Freeman "Whitey" Arbo was out fishing for halibut near the Salinas River when he accidentally netted two small basking sharks. He brought them in as a curiosity because none had been spotted in the bay for several years. At that time, Knut Hovden of Hovden Canneries in Monterey, who also had a processing plant in Moss Landing,



Whitey Arbo at right with his catch, Moss Landing, 1948. MHAA Collection.

thought he could do something with them. His plan was to process the liver oil and sell it to paint and soap manufactures. The scheme didn't quite work out, however, because when the oil was added to the paint, the paint wouldn't dry, and when it was added to the soap, the soap wouldn't lather. Undeterred, Hovden and other processors continued to buy the shark catch for making dog and cat food, and soon discovered that it was excellent for tanning leather as well.

With this post-World War II revival of the basking shark fishery, things became much more business-like. The sharks appeared in the bay for just a few months, beginning in the early spring. Every day, a dozen boats would sail forth to hunt them, including the *Two Brothers* with Thomas Machado and Chester Gilky aboard. Competition was fierce because the fishermen were making five cents a pound just for the liver. Whitey harpooned one shark with a liver that weighed 3500 pounds.

These guys, far more efficient than Pop Ernest and Henry Leppert had been, were able to bring in three or four sharks a day thanks to their use of spotter planes. When a school was spotted, the pilot would radio directions to the boat. Sardine fisherman who borrowed this technique found it to be very effective. This second basking shark fishery ended by 1952 when, once again, basking sharks stopped visiting the bay.



Bill Tomlinson in 1948 holding two harpoons. J.B. Phillips photograph, MHAA Collection.



Too long for the truck; Moss Landing, April 1948. J.B. Phillips photograph. MHAA Collection.



Whitey Arbo closes in on his target, April 1948. J.B. Phillips photograph. MHAA Collection.



Removal of basking shark liver, Moss Landing, 1948. J.B. Phillips photograph. MHAA Collection.

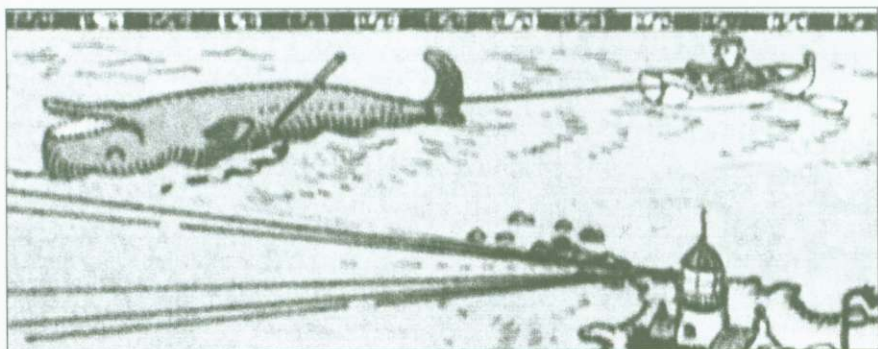
Conclusion

The basking shark is a coastal pelagic species found throughout the world, ranging in the Atlantic from Newfoundland to Florida, from southern Brazil to Argentina, and from Iceland and Norway to Senegal, including parts of the Mediterranean. In the eastern Pacific, basking sharks can be found off Japan, China, and the Koreas as well as western and southern Australia and New Zealand. In the western Pacific, they range from the Gulf of Alaska to the Gulf of California, and from Ecuador to Chile.

Today, basking sharks are a rare sight on Monterey Bay. When they do make an appearance, it's no longer by the hundreds. The last recorded local sighting of a small school of basking sharks was in the late 1980s. Occasional individuals still appear from time to time, causing quite a stir among marine scientists.

Of course, times and attitudes have changed, and now many organizations world-wide are working to protect this fascinating species. Still, I can't help thinking that it would be quite something to travel back to the 1920s, hitch a ride on the *Pop Ernest* with those Hotel Del Monte swells, and watch Henry Leppert dancing on the belly of the shark.

Tim Thomas, Museum Historian and Director of Public Programs for the Monterey History & Art Association, is the editor of the J.B. Phillips Historical Fisheries Report. He has been researching the fisheries of Monterey Bay for twenty years.



This enlarged detail from Jo Mora's Monterey Peninsula Carte, 1926, shows a generic "big fish" harpooned and belly up near Point Pinos Lighthouse.

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Freeman ("Whitey") Arbo, retired basking shark fishermen, from a series of interviews with the author, 1996.

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Dr. Henry Mollett's Shark Homepage—

—features the basking shark footage from *I Cover the Waterfront*.

Monterey Daily Cypress newspaper, 1908.

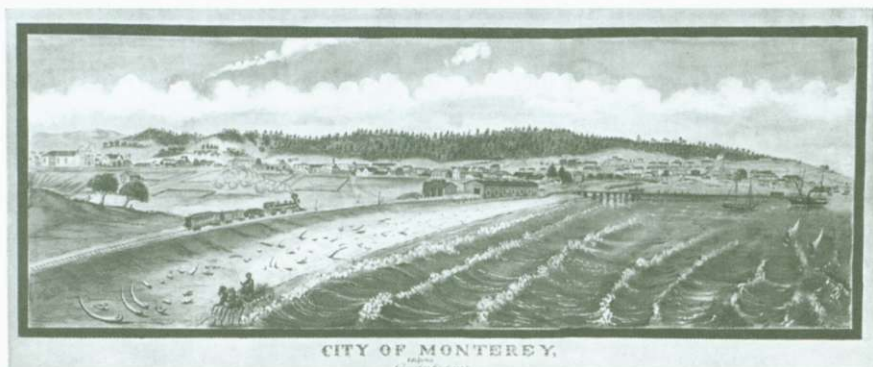
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J.B. Phillips' field notes for "Basking Shark Fishery Revived," *California Fish and Game* 34:11-23, 1948. J.B. Phillips Collection, Maritime Museum of Monterey.

William Ripley, retired fisheries biologist, from a series of interviews with the author, 1995-2004.

M. N. Schaefer, "Sun Shark Liver Oil: Nature's Own Tonic," circa 1930. J.B. Phillips Collection, MHAA.

Albert Thevenin, retired basking shark fishermen, from a series of interviews with the author, 1996.



Leon Troussset's late nineteenth century painting shows whale bones cast up on the beach. Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Fort Worth, Texas, 1977-1.

CANNERY ROW

THE HISTORY OF JOHN STEINBECK'S
OLD OCEAN VIEW AVENUE



MICHAEL KENNETH HEMP

PHOTOGRAPHY FROM THE
PAT HATHAWAY HISTORICAL PHOTO COLLECTION

**Cannery Row: The History of John Steinbeck's
Old Ocean View Avenue**

by Michael Kenneth Hemp

Carmel: The History Company, 2002

And Other Books on Cannery Row

Reviewed by Neal B. Hotelling

Debates rage as to what constitutes Cannery Row. Perhaps Steinbeck described it best by calling it "...a tone, a habit, a nostalgia, a dream." But assuming from the history that it was (is?) a real and tangible place, where does one find it?

A good place to start is Michael Hemp's **Cannery Row: The History of John Steinbeck's Old Ocean View Avenue**, with its rich sampling of photographs from the Pat Hathaway Historical Photo Collection, further enlivened by the author's concise captions. If you're only familiar with the earlier version (first compiled in 1986), the 2002 edition is well worth another look.

Each image has been meticulously scanned and printed using the latest stochastic technology. The resulting reproductions are amazingly sharp; details lost in the earlier edition now seem almost to jump off the pages. The format is slightly larger than the earlier version, adding to the clarity of the photographs. Finally, several archival images were not available earlier, including a section on Ed Ricketts, the marine biologist who was Steinbeck's mentor and close friend.

Despite the allusion in the title, however, Cannery Row was not a creation of John Steinbeck. The real Cannery Row was bigger than Steinbeck's 1945 novella, as becomes evident from the first quick perusal of Hemp's attractive paperback. In the brief introductory pages, Hemp succinctly sets Cannery Row in time and place, recalling the Native Americans, Spaniards, Yankees and Chinese who shaped the surrounding area in the days before the arrival of the railroad and the resulting fishing industry boom. In the pages that follow, he uses nearly 200 images, several spread across two pages, to retell the story of this flourishing industry.

Brief narrative inserts, along with a few illustrative maps, cast added light on the saga. The approach is somehow both larger-than-life yet also a minimalist synthesis of a complex history.

Near the end of his book, Hemp includes a map of "Historic Cannery Row" identifying each of the sites and structures that made this roughly one-mile strip of coastline whirl and roar—the economic engine that powered Monterey through the first half of the twentieth century. With this map and the book's illustrations, a modern-day explorer walking the street can identify the edifices that remain from that earlier era, placing them in the context of their original settings.

The joy of this book is its simplicity. It can be read in an hour or two, but its images can also be studied for years and will continue to disclose new details. Other books offer more comprehensive information, but this is the book on Cannery Row that I find myself reaching for most often, so I am particularly grateful for this new and improved edition.

A number of early books on Cannery Row have been allowed to go out of print. Ray March's 32-page **A Guide to Cannery Row** (1962), depicting the early phases of the transition from canning district to tourist area in word and image, is hardest to find. **Cannery Row: A Pictorial History**, by John and Regina Hicks (Creative Books, 1972), was another early effort to compress the history into a 46-page, illustrated pamphlet that tells the story primarily through captions accompanying both historic and contemporary images. **Steinbeck's Street: Cannery Row**, by Maxine Knox and Mary Rodriguez (Presidio Press, 1980), offers some interesting insights regarding the cannery era and the years that followed, providing a different perspective for those who can find this out-of-print paperback—not to mention a variety of sardine recipes for the more adventuresome.

Randall A. Reinstedt's **Where Have All the Sardines Gone?** (Ghost Town Publications, 1978) remains in print. Like Hemp and several other authors mentioned here, Reinstedt relies largely on photographs to tell the story. The smaller format does not allow for depth of detail, but he provides a number of images not found in other publications and keeps his style comparatively light.

In "**All the Heroes are Dead: The Ecology of John Steinbeck's Cannery Row**" (Ramparts Press, 1974), Tom Weber chose to capture the "decline, death and 'rebirth' of Cannery Row" through his own contemporary photographs and poetry. For many years, Weber's studio-gallery was an integral part of Cannery Row, occupying the former Wave Street residence of Yee Sing, an early Chinese fisherman, and his family. Weber later published the large-format **John Steinbeck's Cannery Row: A-Time-to-Remember** (Orenda/Unity Press, 1983), featuring more photographs and fewer poems.

Inside Cannery Row (Lexicos, 1988) by Bruce Ariss gives readers a first-hand look into the non-fishing side of Cannery Row. After Ariss, an artist-writer-entrepreneur, and his new bride Jean (also a writer) moved to the Peninsula in 1934, they became part of the inner circle of Steinbeck, Ricketts and the other illuminati who gathered regularly at The Lab on Ocean View Avenue. Illustrated with the author's contemporary sketches of the era, this book conveys an insider's view of what life was like for Monterey's Depression-era artists. It also recounts a marine specimen-gathering trip, with Steinbeck and Ricketts and Bruce and Jean traveling to Baja California by car years before the more famous ocean journey to the Sea of Cortez.

Tom Mangelsdorf's "**A History of Steinbeck's Cannery Row**" (Western Tanager Press, 1986) utilizes numerous photographs to tell a familiar story, but his more detailed research and more extensive text set this book apart. Although the hardback edition of this 216-page volume is out of print, the large-format paperback remains readily available to anyone looking for a more in-depth view of the people and events involved in the birth, boom and bust that comprised the still-fascinating cannery era.

Neal Hotelling, former president of the Cannery Row Foundation, is author of Pebble Beach Golf Links: The Official History (Ann Arbor: Clocktower Press, 1999), currently in its fifth printing.

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