

The foam-crested reefs of these largely uncharted seas were the most dangerous menace. Many a whale ship left her bones on the coral, and many a New England sailor died on the reefs or found uncertain shelter with the unpredictable South Sea islanders. In 1836 Horace Holden published a little book describing the adventures and sufferings of the survivors of the whaleship *Mentor*, Captain Edward Bonnard, which was wrecked on a reef of the Palau group in the western Carolines on May 21, 1832. Of the crew of twenty-two, half were lost. The surviving eleven men, including Captain Bonnard and Holden, a farm boy from Hillsborough, New Hampshire, who was on his first voyage, got away in the one remaining boat and reached a sandspit on the lee side of the lagoon. In the distance a small island could be seen, from which natives soon arrived who relieved them of guns, cutlasses, and clothing. A few days later the sailors reached Babelthuap Island, the largest of the Palau group, where they were adopted by one of the native tribes and where they found a tattooed Englishman who had lived there for thirty years. The natives helped build a large canoe. Upon its completion eight New Englanders with three natives set sail for the Celebes in the canoe and the whale boat. (The other three sailors had taken native wives and decided to remain on Babelthuap.) The second day out the canoe capsized and all eleven men, suffering from thirst, continued their voyage in the overloaded whale boat.

On December 6, 1832, they drifted near Tobi or Lord North Island about half way between the Palaus and Celebes, where they were captured and kept in slavery by the natives of that remote little land. They were the first white men to set foot on the island although it had been discovered in 1767.

On February 3, 1833, a ship appeared, but only Captain Bonnard and one sailor were able to get on board. The six

Yankees left on Tobi were all forcefully tattooed. Another ship, which appeared August 3, sailed off without being aware of the stranded men. In nineteen months on Tobi four of the white men and two of the Caroline Islanders died of starvation and mistreatment. On Thanksgiving Day, 1834, Horace Holden and his friend Benjamin Nute, the only two white survivors on Tobi, were rescued by the bark *Britannia*, Captain Henry Short, and taken to Canton from where, after several weeks' recuperation, they were returned to New York. Holden, with the help of the Reverend John Pickering of Boston, wrote *A Narrative of the Shipwreck, Captivity, and Suffering of Horace Holden and Benjamin Nute*, and by its sale raised enough money to take him to Washington to plead in Congress for the rescue of the men on Babelthuap. In the meantime, however, two of the men were rescued by the U.S.S. *Vincennes* and arrived in Hampton Roads, Virginia. The third man had already escaped on another ship.¹⁶

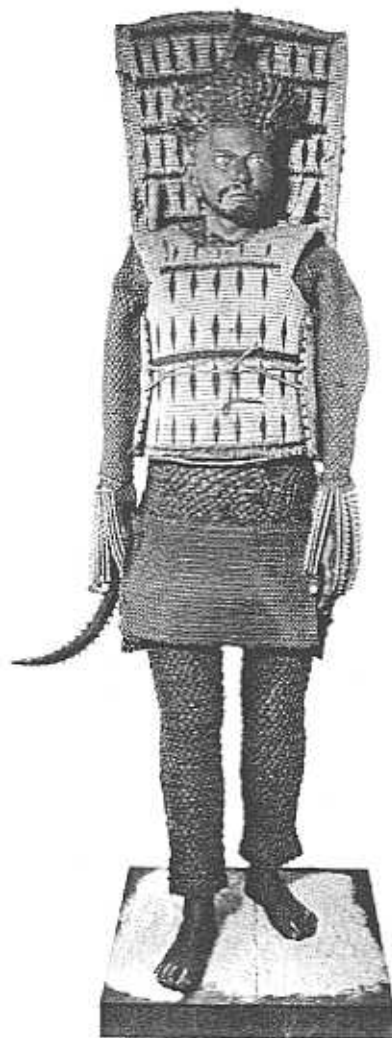


There was one very pleasant aspect of whaling and the abundant evidence of it in collections along the New England seaboard is as attractive as it is ingenious. Whalers carried large crews for the size of the ships for they needed many more men to man the whale boats than a merchant vessel required. But these large crews meant that the men had endless hours at sea with time on their hands, time often devoted to scrimshawing—the art of carving in bone or wood or ivory. Some of the results of this time-consuming craft were useful—belaying pins, fids, clothespins, handles for tools, bootjacks, and what not. Swifts for winding yarn and jaggging wheels to put the crimp in the edges of pies were made to bring home to the womenfolks.

Society was founded in 1799, and one of its avowed purposes was "to collect natural and artificial curiosities such as are to be found beyond Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope." In order to belong, a member had to be a Salem captain who had rounded one of the two great capes in command of a Salem ship. This was an extraordinary restriction and yet the Society, from the time it was founded until its Museum was taken over by the Peabody Trustees in the 1860's, had over four hundred members—an indication of the extent of foreign commerce in this small city on the North Shore of Massachusetts Bay. Each member was instructed to keep a journal to deposit with the Society and to bring back material for its museum. In 1821 the East India Marine Society went beyond this, and published a catalogue of its collections; another edition appeared in 1831. Thus the Pacific material collected at an early date was also unusually well documented.

Because of the domination of Salem men in the Fiji trade, the Peabody Museum collection from that group of islands is large and important. There is some pottery, many ornaments, bowls, canoe models, spears, tapa beaters, stacks of tapa, and almost literally cords of clubs. The rarest Fiji specimen is a model of a native temple made of sennit and having two towers. This is the only one of its kind in existence, all other temple models being modestly equipped with only one tower. The Salem collection is one of the world's three great Fijian collections; the others are at Cambridge University in England, and in the Fiji Museum at Suva.

The largest collection of early Micronesian material in the country is also at the Peabody Museum. It includes the only known lot of material of any size from the little island of Tobi, or Lord North Island, where Horace Holden, the tattooed man, was wrecked on the whaleship *Mentor*. The collection was



51. Gilbert Islander in coconut fiber armor

made by two Salem sailors whose ship stopped at that island for water.

But the museum's Polynesian collections are its most extensive and best documented and contain the greatest number of rarities. The East India Marine Society was directly responsible for organizing the tendency of men in strange ports to collect curiosities, and, because catalogues of those collections were published, the date of accession is known. The name of the donor is usually that of the collector, and the very logbooks of the voyages on which the specimens were acquired are frequently in the institution's library. Fifty-three men contributed specimens from the South Seas. The largest collections were given before 1830 by Nathaniel Page, William Putnam Richardson, William Richardson, Benjamin Vanderford, Thomas Meek,

and Israel Williams, who made several voyages to the Pacific. There are substantial lots of material from Benjamin Wallis and John Eagleston. Captain Clifford Crowninshield of Salem and Captain Matthew Folger of Nantucket met somewhere in the