Johan Hjort is a man I would like to have known. A professor of marine biology at the University of Oslo before World War II, he carefully analysed the technological whaling of his time. He became a recognized expert in its science and was chosen to chair conferences and conventions which had belatedly convened to regulate the harvest of this valuable economic resource.

Hjort concluded, in the self-effacing tone of many of his fellow Norwegians, that the increasingly sophisticated means of hunting actually jeopardized the whaling industry because the technology offered no solution to the problem of stock replenishment. Under such telling titles as "The Story of Whaling: A Parable of Sociology," "Human Activities and the Study of Life in the Sea," and "The Optimum Catch," he explained how populations of whales, finite in number and renewable only over a long time, could not support the increased demand placed upon them by commercially motivated factory-ship fleets and coastwise chaser boats which by 1930 scoured every ocean. He showed that the harvesting of whales proceeded contrary to the expectations of agriculture and domestic husbandry, where breeding improvements lead to strains of animals and plants that reproduce in larger numbers or faster; are more impervious to disease; or thrive in wastelands formerly considered unusable. Increased and improved whaling led only to a point
Beyond which stocks could not replenish themselves. There was never any opportunity to improve the product or hurry its growth. "Large amounts of capital have been spent by the whalers themselves," Hjort wrote, "on experiments on new machinery for converting the flesh and bones into guano or into food for man and beast. But it is obvious that these praiseworthy efforts are not in themselves enough to establish an equilibrium between the whaling industry and the annual renewal of the stock."

The subject of the present work is commercial whaling north of 49° North latitude and east of 170° West longitude, primarily in the coastal waters of Washington, British Columbia, and southeastern Alaska. Not a few maritime historians argue that the whale fishery of the Pacific Northwest has little significance, that it was a backwater both in the nineteenth century, when its returns were overshadowed by the wealth of the "South Seas" sperm-whale fishery, and also in the twentieth, when bountiful Antarctic catches dominated the business. But the whale fishery of the northeastern Pacific Ocean is a repetitive microcosm of Johan Hjort's thesis and a powerful case study of the short-term effects of intensive whaling on a local or transient whale population.

Hjort showed how the catch from a newly exploited whaling ground increased rapidly up to a turning-point, beyond which a rapid decline inevitably resulted in commercial failure. His theory can be readily demonstrated in the Pacific Northwest in the nineteenth century and again in the twentieth, both in fisheries for right whales and for the various "rorqual" (grooved-jaw) species, including the humpback, finback, and blue whales. Commercial whaling in the eastern North Pacific was supported by the carcasses of almost every species of large whale hunted anywhere on earth; every type of catching equipment from double-flued iron hand-harpoons to 90-millimetre cannons was utilized. And every commercial venture proved the soundness of Hjort's conclusions; improving technology depleted species after species until there was no more profit to be gained in the hunting of them. Then each successive industry died a malingering death.

The slow-swimming, buoyant North Pacific right whales were decimated during the first quarter-century of extensive hunting, between 1840 and 1865. By the second decade of the twentieth century, the species was described in the American press as "one of nature's rarities," whereas in truth it was commercial whaling, not natural circumstance, which had reduced it to near-extinction. Humpback whales in Pacific Northwestern waters were similarly depleted during a ten-year period beginning in 1905, and the numbers of blue and finback whales decreased significantly during the era of modern whaling in British Columbia and southeastern Alaska, as whalingmen harpooned every animal they could overtake, including juveniles and lactating females.
The Northwest Coast right-whale fishery of the nineteenth century is culturally significant as well. The earliest whaleship crews who came ashore on the Northwest Coast of America left behind a scant but important record of their interaction with both native and colonial residents. In the manner of the fur traders who came before them and the better-organized mining, timber, and railroad interests which followed, the early whalenmen contributed to the change which overwhelmed the Pacific Northwest and forever altered the little-populated, pristine wilderness.

Surviving journals of whaling voyages to the North Pacific frequently confuse the appellations "Northwest Coast," "Kamchatka," and "Kodiak." Before 1840 the "Northwest Coast" might even refer to Alta California and the sperm-whaling grounds offshore from San Francisco Bay and Monterey. And since the men before the mast were often uninformed of the ship's exact position, many journalkeepers made errors based on hearsay and misinformation. One such sailor, finding himself near "Trinity Island"—not so very far from Kodiak—mistakenly described the landfall to the north as the "Coast of Kamchatka," when he was in fact describing the Alaska Peninsula. The boundaries of the whaling grounds were eventually delimited by the natural range of the quarry, and since the whales of choice—right whales—could be found throughout a large contiguous area adjacent to the Northwest Coast, this place soon became identified in their journals as the "North-West Coast of America" or simply, the "Nor'west" ground. During the half-century from 1840, whaleboat crews lanced the majority of the right whales to be found there, and then the coastal waters were almost abandoned by sailwhalemen. But the development of mechanized technologies, which allowed the hunters to pursue the fast and strong rorqual whales, led to the construction of mechanized shore-whaling stations from Washington State northward to the Aleutian Islands. After 1900 an entirely new industry matured and briefly flourished.

Two important aspects of whaling in the far North Pacific deserve attention but must necessarily be ignored. One is the right-whale fishery along the Russian Kamchatka peninsula. Though short-lived, its exploitation was of great economic importance and central to the removal of the right whale from the western North Pacific. The rise and decline of pelagic factory-ship whaling and the role it played after 1910 in harvesting northern whale populations are similarly set aside. It must be sufficient to note three periods of factory-ship operation in the eastern North Pacific, beginning with the arrival of the prototypical Norwegian factories, Admiralen, Sommerstad, and Capella, which are only briefly considered, and the Kit, which cruised the Arctic with Eskimo whalenmen during the summers of 1912–14.

During the second period, in the mid-1930s, both Russian and Japanese factory ships made exploratory forays into the Bering Sea and along the east-
ern North Pacific rim. Then, after World War II, Japan and the Soviets resumed their work and subsequently maintained a presence along the edge of the continental shelf near Canada and the United States. The proximity of one such fleet to Cape Mendocino, California, inspired a confrontation in June 1975 between Greenpeace and chaser boats attached to the Soviet factory Dalnij Vostok\textsuperscript{1}—an event which focused the attention of North Americans on the attrition of the large whales.

The story that is told here, of the development of whaling in the Pacific Northwest, begins to fill a remarkable void in Pacific maritime history, a virtually unknown chapter in the development of commerce in the Pacific Northwest. The seafaring history of the region has been altogether overwhelmed by the preliminary voyages of exploration, the lucrative exploits of the fur traders, and the dangerous progress of sailing cargo ships. The source of this unexplored history, and the cause of it, were the whales themselves. By a fortuitous concordance of circumstances, the coastal waters of the Pacific Northwest provide a cornucopia of food for migrating cetacean species and a comfortable and often protected home for smaller, non-migratory whales. Upwellings from a ragged sea floor constantly in ferment, combined with the salutary effect of the warm current called Kuro Siwo, which crosses the Pacific from Japan, nurture all manner of plant and animal life, much of which is utilized as food by the northern whales. The proximity of the best feeding areas to shore made certain whales accessible to native whale hunters, whose travel into the deepwater environment was largely restricted by the limitations of their vessels. Crews of commercial whaling ships later captured these species as well as others, such as the sperm whales and right whales, which were less likely to come within range of native harpoons.

In describing the whaling, particularly where it concerns the activities of the nineteenth-century sailors, it seems appropriate to use many of their own words and phrases. No less a maritime historian than Samuel Eliot Morison advised caution in so doing; he wrote: "There is nothing that adds so much to the charm and effectiveness of a history as good quotations from the sources, especially if the period is somewhat remote. But there is nothing so disgusting to the reader as long, tedious, broken quotations in small print, especially those in which, to make sense, the author has to interpolate words in brackets.\textsuperscript{6}"

Today, more than in Morison's time, we live in a visual world. We have less enthusiasm for the arduous and increasingly unpractised task of creating images from the inked word. But because there are so few "pictures" from the early times, so few photographs and accurate lithographs, the chapters dealing with the sail-whalemen are illuminated by the words of their journalists who reported the moment. Virtually all are quoted from entries written on the Northwest Coast. When we come to the modern whalenmen of the
twentieth century, then it is time to leave the quotations and look at the photographs.

While attending to the wisdom of Samuel Eliot Morison, one must also hear the American historian (and President) Theodore Roosevelt, about whose style his biographer Edmund Morris has written: "Not for him the maunderings of the 'institutional' historians, with their obsessive analyses of treatises and committee reports. He wanted his readers to smell the bitter smoke of campfires." In this work I have necessarily bound myself to antique treatises and committee reports, but I have tried also to do the Roosevelt style some justice by sailing the reader from page first to page last. As for completeness, it is always true that a researcher's hundred answers raise a thousand questions, and it will be rewarding to see what questions devolve from this present work.

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