

**Finding Aid to the Martha's Vineyard Museum  
Record Unit 272  
Captain Hartson H. Bodfish Collection**  
By Margot Weston

**Descriptive Summary**

**Repository:** Martha's Vineyard Museum

**Call No.**

**Title:** Captain Hartson H. Bodfish Collection

**Creator:** Margot Weston

**Quantity:** .50 Cu. Ft.

**Abstract:** This collection contains personal papers, correspondence, tax receipts, oral history, and a brief genealogy. Captain Bodfish died at home in Vineyard Haven in the early days of February 1945 at the age of 81.

**Administrative Information**

**Acquisition Information:** The material was acquired by the Martha's Vineyard Museum at unknown times by donations made including some by Captain Bodfish.

**Processing Information:** Margot Weston

**Access Restrictions:** none

**Use Restrictions:** none

**Preferred citation for publication:** Martha's Vineyard Museum, Captain Hartson H. Bodfish Collection, Record Unit 272

**Index Terms**

**Bodfish, Hartson H.**

**Bodfish, Waldo**

**Whaling Artic Regions**

**Whalers (Persons) Biography**

**Bowhead Whale Hunting – Alaska**

**Eskimos Alaska – Wainwright – Social Life and Customs**

**Barnacle Club**

**San Francisco, CA**

**Inupiaq Eskimo**

**Series and Subseries Arrangement**

Series I: Family Papers

Subseries A: Correspondence

Subseries B: Personal Papers

Subseries C: Oral History

Subseries D: Genealogy  
Series II: Manuscript  
Series III: Reference  
Subseries A: Articles  
Subseries B: Newspaper Clippings  
Subseries C: Miscellaneous

**Historical Note:** Captain Hartson H. Bodfish was one of the outstanding and very successful whaling captains from Martha's Vineyard. In addition to descriptions of life in the arctic and whaling, there are references to life on the island of Martha's Vineyard and some information on the family. Reference is made to the Captain Willis Howes Family Record Unit 271, to two books authored by John A. Cook, a whaling captain and to the Intelligencer Index. There is a collection of artifacts in The Cleveland Museum of Natural History and there is a listing of the ships Captain Bodfish was on at The Old Dartmouth Historical Society of New Bedford, Massachusetts.

**Scope and Content Note:** The manuscript of the book, "Chasing the Bowhead"; articles from an Alaskan son as dictated to others; some family history; and a good description of life during a whaling voyage are included in this collection. A copy of the book is housed in the Library of the Martha's Vineyard Museum. An envelope, hand made of shark skin, is in the collection. It was sent April 4, 1901 from the Arctic Ocean to Captain Bodfish's wife in Vineyard Haven. She received it September 14, 1901.

## **Series Descriptions**

### **Series I: Family Papers**

Box 1 of 1

Subseries A: Correspondence

Folder 1: Original Letters from Captain Bodfish

Folder 2: Copies of Letters from Captain Bodfish

Folder 3: Waldo Bodfish, Sr

Folder 4: Cleveland Museum

Subseries B: Legal Papers

Folder 5: Bills and Receipts

Subseries C: Oral History

Folder 6: Waldo Bodfish, Sr.

Subseries D: Bodfish Family Genealogy

Folder 7: Genealogy

### **Series II: Manuscript**

Box 1 of 1

Folder 8: "Chasing the Bowhead" - Pages 1-10

Folder 9: "Chasing the Bowhead" -Pages 11-20

Folder 10: "Chasing the Bowhead" - Pages 21-30

Folder 11: "Chasing the Bowhead" - Pages 31-40

Folder 12: "Chasing the Bowhead" - Pages 41-50

Folder 13: "Chasing the Bowhead" - Pages 51-60

Folder 14: "Chasing the Bowhead" - Pages 61-71

Folder 15: "Chasing the Bowhead" - Miscellaneous Pages

**Series III: Reference**

Box 1 of 1

Subseries A: Articles and Publications

Folder 16: Bills and Receipts

Subseries B: Newspaper Clippings

Folder 17: Clippings

Subseries C: Reference

Folder 18: Other Locations