

# *Finch & C<sup>o</sup>*



## **SCRIMSHAW PAPERKNIFE, THE CARVED WHALE IVORY HANDLE WITH HEART AND ANCHOR MOTIFS**

A SCRIMSHAW PAPERKNIFE, THE CARVED WHALE IVORY HANDLE WITH HEART AND ANCHOR MOTIFS

INLAID WITH BALEEN. A BALEEN KNOP BELOW THE HANDLE INLAID WITH AN IVORY 'WHALE'S EYE'.

THE BLADE SHAPED FROM ONE PIECE OF BROWN BALEEN. PROBABLY AMERICAN

CIRCA 1870 – 1880

SIZE: 34.5CM LONG – 13½ INS LONG

## **LITERATURE**

WHALING INVOLVED LONG PERIODS AT SEA WITH ONLY INTERMITTENT ACTION. 'SCRIMSHANDING' WAS ONE OF A VARIETY OF PASTIMES EMPLOYED BY SEAMEN TO AVOID THE BOREDOM OF THE VOYAGE AND THE PERIODS OF GREAT INACTIVITY ON BOARD SHIP. THESE LARGE INTERVALS OF TIME DURING WHICH THE SEAMEN WERE LEFT TO THEIR OWN DEVICES DID NOT AFFECT THEIR WAGES AS A FORM OF PAYMENT HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED THAT WAS PECULIAR TO THE WHALING INDUSTRY. INSTEAD OF A REGULAR SALARY THE WHALER'S PAY WAS BASED ON A PRESET SHARE IN THE PROFITS. THIS WAS TERMED A 'LAY' AND VARIED FROM THE CAPTAIN'S LARGE PORTION DOWN TO A MINUTE SHARE FOR AN INEXPERIENCED SEAMAN.