Finch & Co

ENGLISH SAILOR'S SCRIMSHAW TURNED AND FLUTED WHALEBONE WALKING CANE

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MID 19TH CENTURY

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LITERATURE

MADE ON BOARD WHALING SHIPS DURING THEIR LONG SEA VOYAGES, SAILORS MOSTLY MADE WALKING CANES TO SELL ON THEIR RETURN TO THEIR HOME PORT TO AUGMENT THEIR 'SHARE'. THE TIME SPENT SCRIMSHAWING DID NOT AFFECT THEIR WAGES AS A PECULIAR FORM OF PAYMENT HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED IN THE WHALING INDUSTRY IN THAT WHALERS WERE NOT PAID A REGULAR SALARY. INSTEAD THEIR PAY WAS BASED ON A PRE-SET SHARE IN THE PROFITS. THIS WAS CALLED A 'LAY' AND VARIED FROM QUITE A LARGE PORTION FOR THE CAPTAIN TO ALMOST MINISCULE SHARES FOR A GREENHAND OR INEXPERIENCED SEAMAN.