Finch & Co



VERY FINE SAILORS SEAM RUBBER

A VERY FINE SAILORS SEAM RUBBER WITH A SAILORS CARVED 'KNOT' TO THE HANDLE

SUPERB COLOUR AND PATINA

WHALE-TOOTH, WHALE BALEEN

EARLY 19TH CENTURY

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SIZE: 14CM LONG - 5½ INS LONG

LITERATURE

SEAM RUBBERS MADE OF WALRUS IVORY, WHALEBONE OR WOOD HAD A PRACTICAL SHIP BOARD USE FOR THE SAILMAKER IN HELPING TO FLATTEN THE CANVAS INSURING GOOD SEAMS. THE SAILMAKER AND HIS ASSISTANT HAD

PLENTY TO DO ON A LARGE WHALING SHIP REPAIRING OR MAKING NEW SAILS AND DEXTERITY, PATIENCE AND A LOVE OF GOOD WORKMANSHIP WAS NEEDED IN THEIR WORK. THEY USED A VARIETY OF TOOLS SUCH AS FIDS, HOOKS, SEAM RUBBERS AND NEEDLE HORNS WHICH THEY OFTEN CRAFTED THEMSELVES ON BOARD SHIP, FOR IT WAS A TRADITION THAT A SAILOR COULD NOT REMAIN IDLE EVEN FOR A FEW MOMENTS.

MANY BRITISH AND AMERICAN SEA CAPTAINS AND OFFICERS DURING THE 19TH CENTURY WERE MEMBERS OF MASONIC LODGES AND THE CEREMONIES AND EMBLEMS OF THE ORDER WERE USED DECORATIVELY ON SCRIMSHAW ITEMS SUCH AS THIS SEAM RUBBER, WHICH WERE MADE AS TOOLS BY MARINERS ON BOARD SHIP ON COMMISSION OR FOR THEIR OWN USE.

WHEN THE WHALE-MEN WERE NOT ENGAGED IN HUNTING WHALES OR ROUTINE MAINTENANCE THEIR SPARE TIME WAS SPENT CARVING MATERIALS HARVESTED FROM THE WHALES AND NOT NEEDED COMMERCIALLY. AT THE END OF A LONG, OFTEN TWO TO THREE YEAR VOYAGE, THE RESULTING CAREFULLY CRAFTED OBJECTS WOULD PROVIDE TREASURED SOUVENIRS FOR LOVED ONES AT HOME, OR MEMENTOES FOR USE ON BOARD.

SEAM RUBBERS WERE A SAILMAKER'S TOOL, HAND-MADE IN ONE PIECE, FOR WORKING AND SMOOTHING THE CLOTH OF SAILS, TARPAULINS, CANOPIES AND HAMMOCKS ON BOARD SHIP. THRIFTY CAPTAINS WHO DID NOT WANT THE COST OF NEW SAILS TAKEN OUT OF THEIR SHARE OR 'LAY' INSISTED ON PATCHING WORN OUT OR TORN CANVAS SAILS. SEAM RUBBERS WERE ALSO USED FOR DUNGAREES, JACKETS, SLICKERS AND OTHER SAILOR-MADE AND SAILOR-REPAIRED GARMENTS.

PROVENANCE

PRIVATE WELSH COLLECTION FORMED PRIOR TO 1959