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 Vinyard 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 artic 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 Artic 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**
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