



Not all scrimshaw was made from whalebone. Some whalers would pick up tortoise shells, ostrich eggs or other materials to carve during their travels.

# SCRIMSHAW

## Art of American whalers

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*For The Astorian*

**S**crimshaw, or artwork made typically from whale bones or teeth, is often considered one of the first truly American folk arts.

American whaling ships based on the East Coast during the 1700s and 1800s invested in their art as a way to pass the time onboard during long voyages.

Whaling ships had more sailors on board than the aver-

age sailing ship to hunt and process whales when they found them. However, there was also a lot of down time as the whalers sought out their targets.

When all the chores onboard were completed and there was nothing better to do, whalers turned to scrimshaw.

Most traditional scrimshaw was made from whalebone or sperm whale teeth.

*See Scrimshaw, Page B2*



This pie crimper is an example of scrimshaw used for more useful purposes.

