



**J. FOSTER
HISTORIC SIGNS**

*Handcrafted signs
in the style of
18th & 19th
century artisans.*

THE SPOUTER INN— PETER COFFIN, INNKEEPER*

In the opening pages of Herman Melville's American classic, *Moby Dick*, Ishmael, a stranger to Nantucket, describes finding lodging the night before he signed on to the Pequod: "Moving on, I at last came to a dim sort of out-hanging light not far from the docks, and heard a forlorn creaking on the air; and looking up, saw a swinging sign over the door with a white painting upon it, faintly representing a tall, straight jet of misty spray, and these words underneath—"The Spouter Inn": —Peter Coffin. Coffin?—Spouter?—Rather ominous in that particular connexion, thought I." Considering that *Moby Dick* is a novel, and we don't know that this sign ever existed, this is an interpretation of that sign.

In 19th-century whaling, the sperm whale was a particular species highly prized for a unique substance called spermaceti, a waxy oil used to make superior-quality candles, a vast improvement over earlier versions.

During the early 1800s, ships from New England took long voyages—some lasting for years—to the Pacific Ocean in search of sperm whales. The Golden Age of American whaling extended until its demise in the 1850s with the invention of the oil well.

Melville himself had sailed on a whaling ship, the *Acushnet*, out of New Bedford in January 1841. While at sea Melville would have heard many tales of whaling, including reports of whales that attacked men and ships, and yarns of a malicious white whale known to cruise the waters of the South Pacific. —Source: *A Brief History of Whaling*, by Thought Co.



** This sign is a re-print of one of my original boards. It is a high resolution photograph mounted on a panel board, with old tobacco sticks used for framing. The reverse side is painted in black oil. The size is 17" wide by 8-1/2" high.*

Please message for pricing.

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