



Narrative of the Most Extraordinary and Distressing Shipwreck of the Whale-Ship Essex: The Illustrated Edition

Owen Chase , Eric Jay Dolin (Foreword)

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Relive the tragic tale of the whaling ship *Essex* in the first illustrated edition of this classic whaling memoir, the true-life horror story that inspired *Moby-Dick*.

Owen Chase was the first mate on the ill-fated American whaling ship *Essex*, which was attacked and sunk by a sperm whale in the southern Pacific Ocean in 1820. The crew spent months at sea in leaking boats and endured the blazing sun, attacks by killer whales, and lack of food. The men were forced to resort to cannibalism before the final eight survivors were rescued. Herman Melville based his 1851 novel, *Moby-Dick*, on the sinking.

Chase recorded the tale of the ship's sinking and the following events with harrowing clarity in the *Narrative of the Most Extraordinary and Distressing Shipwreck of the Whale-Ship Essex*.

"I turned around and saw him about one hundred rods [500 m or 550 yards] directly ahead of us, coming down with twice his ordinary speed of around 24 knots (44 km/h), and it appeared with tenfold fury and vengeance in his aspect. The surf flew in all directions about him with the continual violent thrashing of his tail. His head about half out of the water, and in that way he came upon us, and again struck the ship." - Owen Chase.

Filled with art, photographs, maps, and artifacts, this is a richly illustrated edition of Chase's memoir, augmented with memoirs of other participants, as well as the perspectives of historians, contemporary and modern.

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From Reader Review Narrative of the Most Extraordinary and Distressing Shipwreck of the Whale-Ship Essex: The Illustrated Edition for online ebook

Brianna Bowman says

A great supplement to In the Heart of the Sea! Short read, incredible story.

Jessica Roberts says

Ick ship wreck horror story

Cannibalism included. Double ick. The scariest part to me, is to have SOME sort of reckoning as to where the boat was, but NOT HAVE THE WINDS blowing in a direction to GET there. A whale of a tail: A whale's revenge.

Knut Sigurd says

Bra bok, dårleg opplesing.

Brooke says

Very interesting read. Beautiful pictures.

Pat says

What a fantastic book! Extremely well written and the pictures, drawings are outstanding. Thrilled to have been chosen to read. Cannot say enough...have to read for yourself! Goodreads winner, thank you!

Tammy says

This book is packed with such great illustrations and photos. You not only get the tale of the Essex as written by Owen Chase but much more. There are various short essays interspersed throughout. There's information on whale fishing, an excerpt from Moby Dick, stories of other boats that were lost. This is a high quality book and a great read!

Lauren Chong Sng says

I was interested to read this after watching the 2015 movie *In the Heart of the Sea*. I should have been reading Thomas Nickerson's account, since that's what the movie was based on (and the novel *Moby Dick* too), but never mind. Anyway, Owen Chase's writing frightened and fascinated; it was clear and vibrant. I recommend it after watching the movie.

Hartung says

An interesting first person account of the true story that inspired *Moby Dick*. Told in a fairly straight forward manner in the language of the day. I say fairly straight forward because the language of the day was subtle and sometimes indirect. I generally enjoy 19th Century writing because the language is so formal and proper but it's been a while and it took some time to get back into the cadence of old time story telling. The weakness of this volume is not Chase's tale which is exceedingly brief but in the supplemental materiel that verged upon pure filler. A mishmash of whale attacks and unrelated cannibal stories. There is no organizational outline to pull these disparate items together into a whole or even explain their relevance to the story of the *Essex*. Save yourself some dough and look up the Wikipedia entry on the *Essex*

Gig Wailgum says

An enjoyable version of the true account that spawned the beastly book by Melville. Lots of side bar stories to help paint the picture. Great illustrations and images.

Jenn says

The Essex Tragedy as Told by the First Mate

Fascinating account of that horrible tragedy. Read this after Philbrick's *In the Heart of the Sea*. The fact that Owen Chase journalist each day through his ordeal is amazing. Highly recommended for those interested in the *Essex* Tragedy. Onward now to *Moby Dick* ~ I hear that is one whale of a tale, but I think I am ready now. There is much to be gleaned from Owen Chase's writing: "I attempted to speak a few words of comfort and encouragement to him, and endeavored to persuade him that it was a great weakness and even wickedness to abandon a reliance upon the Almighty, while the least hope, and a breath of life remained..." Owen Chase survived an ordeal most of us would not even be able to imagine. I am glad his account has been preserved all these years.

Heather says

Rivoting and Emotional

Hearing the story from thee source captivates from page one. Even knowing the outcome doesn't prevent

readers from drinking in this tale of survival.

Marsha Boyd says

A very interesting first-hand account by the first mate - whaling ship attacked by a whale and they must survive in small boats for several months. With limited food and water, how they survive is interesting. Hint hint! In case you don't know, this true story was the inspiration for Moby Dick (Melville later met the first mate after reading this account). This is a very short account but it's fairly gripping.

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

Basis for Melville's Moby Dick. I'm rooting for the whale!

Kelley says

Book received courtesy of Goodreads.com giveaway.

This is a beautiful coffee table book. The illustrations and photographs are interspersed throughout the story of the "Essex" as told by Owen Chase. Also, in the book you will find many accounts of other whale wrecks of ships in the 1700's and 1800's. All accounts are taken directly from books of the period so the wording can be a little tricky. However, the idea of the horrific situations these whalers found themselves is quite evident. For anyone interested in the early whaling industry this is a great addition. Also, for lovers of "Moby Dick" that Melville based on Owen Chase's writings.

Robin says

You could just say this is a lovely coffee table book full of incredible illustrations and sidebars about cannibalism to browse, but I am way too much of a Moby-Dick/19th century/old-timey whatnot dork to stop there so I read the whole thing. This book presents Owen Chase's memoir alongside excerpts from Melville and other narratives related to whaling and survival at sea. I was especially fascinated by the story of the ship Medusa and the painting it inspired, "The Raft of the Medusa." (What happens when a hundred people on a raft, lacking the discipline of the sailors on the Essex, have nothing to sustain them except wine?...it's not good for the weak...)

Owen Chase's memoir inspired Moby-Dick, and what I find interesting about both the novel and this memoir is the greater context: we are reminded that beyond the dramatic events is an entire industry and international trade economy. The men in these tales face the intense terrors of the sea, the "monsters" within it, and in some cases the darkest depths of humanity in order to bring home oil for lamps and baleen for corsets. "That dress looks great, especially in the light of this smoke-free spermaceti candle...but was your underwear crafted from a cannibal-free whaling expedition?" Interesting perspective.

