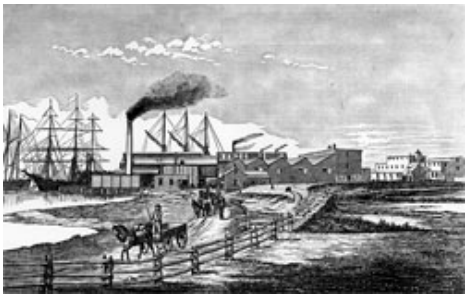
Print

Human Resources: History of Woods Hole

Exerpt from *Down to Sea for Science: 75 years of ocean research at WHOI*

The earliest known historical records for Woods Hole, Massachusetts, concern purchase of land from the Wampanoag Indian Job Notantico by fourteen settlers on December 30, 1679. Small-scale farming, some fishing, and, later, saltworks were the first industries. By 1790, the village boasted ten houses and a population of seventy-four. Sixty years later, there were thirty-four houses and two hundred people. Whaling ships (peaking at nine) worked out of Woods Hole from 1828 to 1864, and the Pacific Guano Company produced fertilizer (based on local fish and bird droppings collected on islands in the Pacific Ocean) from 1863 to 1889 at its factory on the peninsula then known as "Long Neck," now Penzance Point. Four years before Pacific Guano ceased operations, Spencer Baird's location of a pernament fisheries laboratory in Woods Hole initiated the scientific bent of the delightful community.



Enlarge Image

The Pacific Guano Company manufactured fertilizer on Penzance Point in the late nineteenth century. (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution)

Enlarge Image

The Candle House, at right in the photo from about 1890, is all that remains of mid-nineteenth-century whaling in Woods Hole. The smaller building at center housed the try works, where whale oil was rendered. Today the Candle House is used by the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) for offices. (Photo by Baldwin Coolidge, Marine Biological Laboratory Archives)

Additional Information

Woods Hole: The Early Years

From NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Marine Service

» Visit website

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