Introduction

Mary K. Bercaw Edwards

Leviathan, Volume 17, Number 1, March 2015, pp. 118-119 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: 10.1353/lvn.2015.0011

For additional information about this article
http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/lvn/summary/v017/17.1.edwards01.html
The 38th Voyage of the *Charles W. Morgan*

Charles W. Morgan at sea off New London, Conn., on August 1, 2014, Melville’s 195th birthday. This was the only day that all 19 sails were set. Photo courtesy of Dennis Murphy, Mystic Seaport.

Introduction

The *Charles W. Morgan* is the only nineteenth-century whaleship left in the world. Built in 1841, the *Morgan* whaled for eighty years, until 1921. After her whaling career ended, she spent twenty years in the New Bedford area. In 1941, dilapidated and sad-looking, she was towed up the Mystic River to Mystic Seaport Museum in Mystic, Connecticut, where she was berthed in a bed of sand and gravel. In 1973, she was refl oated, but still remained at the Museum. No one ever expected her to leave. That all changed last spring, when she was towed down the Mystic River and across to New London on May 17, where her rigging was completed and she was fully ballasted. Her first sea trial was held on June 7; a week later, on June 15, she set out on her historic 38th Voyage, a journey that took her as far as Stellwagen Bank,
where she sailed amongst the whales. The *Morgan* returned to Mystic Seaport on August 6.

Mystic Seaport received a large NEH grant to fund the educational component of the voyage. Part of the grant included sending scholars, artists, historians, scientists, journalists, teachers, musicians, and whaling descendants on each of the *Morgan*’s transits. Named “38th Voyagers,” the 85 participants, chosen from applicants from across the United States and overseas, slept aboard the *Morgan* the night before the transit, then spent the day at sea documenting their experience. Included in the 85 were the eight Melville scholars who share their reflections on the voyage in this special section of “Extracts.” Peter Norberg sailed on Leg #2 (Newport, RI, to Vineyard Haven, MA), Michael P. Dyer and Robert K. Wallace on Leg #3 (Vineyard Haven, MA, to New Bedford, MA), Hester Blum and Wyn Kelley on Leg #4 (New Bedford, MA, to Buzzard’s Bay, MA), Elizabeth Schultz on Leg #6 (Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary), John Bryant on Leg #9 (Provincetown, MA, to Boston, MA), and Ellie Stedall on Leg #10 (Boston, MA, to Buzzard’s Bay, MA).

—Mary K. Bercaw Edwards
University of Connecticut