

AZOREAN CONNECTIONS WITHIN THE COLLECTIONS OF MYSTIC SEAPORT: THE MUSEUM OF AMERICA AND THE SEA

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Summary: The writers share the types of primary source documents and objects that are found in the collections of Mystic Seaport: The Museum of America and the Sea, specifically highlighting objects related to the Azores. Among them: the world's last remaining wooden whale-ship, the Charles W. Morgan, logbooks, manuscripts, art and objects.

Bielinski, M.; Rose, K. K. (2013) As coleções do Mystic Seaport e as suas ligações com os Açores. O museu da América e o Mar. *Boletim do Núcleo Cultural da Horta*, 22: 225-235.

Sumário: As autoras partilham o conhecimento de algumas fontes primárias de natureza documental e de objetos que fazem parte do Mystic Seaport – o museu da América e o Mar. Destacam-se sobretudo peças relacionadas com os Açores, entre elas o derradeiro exemplar de um navio baleeiro construído em madeira – a Charles Morgan – diários de bordo, manuscritos e peças e objetos de arte.

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Key-words: whaling, logbooks, objects, photographs, Charles W. Morgan, the Azores

Palavras-chave: baleação, diários de bordo, objetos, fotografias, Charles W. Morgan, Açores.

Mystic Seaport: The Museum of America and the Sea is the nation's leading museum presenting the American maritime experience. Located along the banks of the historic Mystic River in Mystic, Connecticut, the museum houses extensive collections representing the material cul-

ture of maritime America and offers educational programs that range from preschool to post-graduate. Scattered throughout the varied collection one will find links to the islands of the Azores and her people; certainly a true testament to the significance of the relationship between the two cul-

tures. This article will highlight some of those links, in particular items preserved in the manuscripts collection, the art and objects collection, and those connections attributed to direct contact with the whale ship Charles W. Morgan herself.



Caption: Starboard quarter view of whaling bark CHARLES W. MORGAN on starboard tack, all sails set. Crewmen visible on deck, in shrouds, and atop hurricane house. Photograph taken around 1920. ©Mystic Seaport, 1978.207.

THE CHARLES W. MORGAN AND THE 38TH VOYAGE

At the heart of the collection at Mystic Seaport is the world famous whale ship, the *Charles W. Morgan*. Easily the most recognizable and celebrated artifact in the collection, she is the sole surviving representative of her kind, the last wooden whale ship in the world. Built in 1841 in New Bed-

ford, Massachusetts and named in honor of her Quaker merchant owner, the 113 foot vessel successfully sailed the world's oceans for 80 years in pursuit of whales and the profits that could be had from their oil. Upon completion of her 37th voyage in 1921, the *Morgan* was struck from

service and was sold. Preservation efforts were initiated soon thereafter, as she was protected and preserved by the organization Whaling Enshrined, Inc. After roughly 20 years of stewardship, in November of 1941 the *Charles W. Morgan* was transferred to Mystic Seaport.

Currently undergoing restoration at the Museum's Henry B. DuPont shipyard, the *Morgan* is being brought back to seaworthiness in preparation for her much celebrated 38th voyage. In the summer of 2014 she will set sail again stopping to visit several prominent ports of call, many of which had been essential to the American whale fishery. Unlike her past 37 voyages, the *Charles W. Morgan* will now embark on a voyage to educate and inspire. The restoration and voyage are based on four key themes:

- **Changing Perceptions of the Natural World.** *This theme highlights American attitudes towards whales as the dominant form of human-whale encounter changed from whale hunt to whale watch.*
- **Perils & Profits of the Whale-hunt.** *This theme centers on the relationships between people and whaleships, from the construction of more than a thousand large wooden vessels, using tools and techniques handed down over time, to the ultimate destruction of all*

but one of these ships through fire, shipwreck, attack, scuttling, abandonment, or neglect. Whaling was a volatile, high-risk and high-profit industry of the kind often glorified as a distinctive American practice.

- **Whaling as Cultural Crossroads**

This theme explores the cultural cross-pollination that took place onboard and around whaling voyages. Whaling communities grew and flourished to support the trade, with the industry center shifting from New England (Nantucket, New Bedford, New London) to the West Coast (San Francisco). Whaling ships routinely stopped in remote places such as Valparaíso, the Galapagos, Cape Verde, and Tristan da Cunha. Larger ports in Hawaii and the Azores supported sizeable expatriate communities where whaling captains' wives and children, whaling agents, and whalers might spend weeks, months, or even years absorbing the sights, sounds, and values of vastly different cultures, returning home with new tastes and ideas.

- **Impact on American Culture**

This theme explores the ways the depiction of whaling in traditional cultural forms including American literature, art, music, and theater as well as in more current forums such as social media memes, Hollywood films, and YouTube videos.



Caption: *The Charles W. Morgan under restoration in the Henry B. DuPont Shipyard at Mystic Seaport. Photograph credit, Andrew Price ©Mystic Seaport.*

Progress of the restoration efforts as well as news and details about her 38th Voyage can be found online at www.mysticseaport.org. The 38th Voyage will begin in May of 2014, when the *Morgan* will set sail and drop anchor in the following New England coastal communities: New London,

Connecticut, Newport, Rhode Island, New Bedford, Martha's Vineyard, Cape Cod, Boston and Provincetown, Massachusetts, concluding her tour at Stellwagen Bank, a National Marine Sanctuary located just off the coast of Boston, Massachusetts. She will then return to Mystic Seaport.

THE MYSTIC SEAPORT COLLECTIONS

Located across the street from the Museum's waterfront, the Mystic Seaport Collections Research Center (CRC) welcomes visitors to research and explore their own personal connection to America's maritime past. With over a million items preserved and on-site, a trip to the Collections Research Center is often the first stop

for many patrons and researchers alike. Within its walls the CRC provides first hand access to a wide array of unique and one of a kind items and artifacts. Examples include maritime photography, books and periodicals, ships plans, manuscripts, videos, sound archives, and watercraft collections.

AZOREAN CONNECTIONS IN THE MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION AT MYSTIC SEAPORT

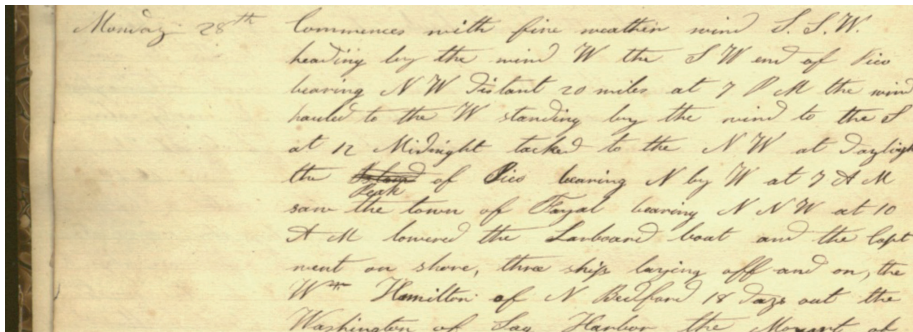
Special attention has recently been focused on certain aspects of the collection that pertain to the Azores. It has been documented through her logbooks that the Azores were an important port of call not only for the *Morgan*, but also for many American whale ships. Providing much needed supplies and a means to complement a shorthanded crew, the islands of the Azores were a welcome sight to many whalships. In exploring this chapter of her history, the staff at the CRC has taken a closer look at the books, maps, art and objects collections which illustrate connections between the *Charles W. Morgan*, Amer-

ican Whalers, and the Portuguese Islanders of the Azores.

With over 1,200 logbooks in the manuscript collection, the CRC is an excellent repository of historical information, often showcasing the intersection of both the American and Portuguese cultures. Many of these logbooks provide a firsthand account of life at sea, race relations, and document the processes, profits, and sacrifices of those involved within the whaling industry. There are roughly 95 logbooks and journals in the collection that reference at least one of the islands of the Azores.

For example,

Log 144 – Voyage 2 of the Charles W. Morgan: July, 1845



©Mystic Seaport, Log 144

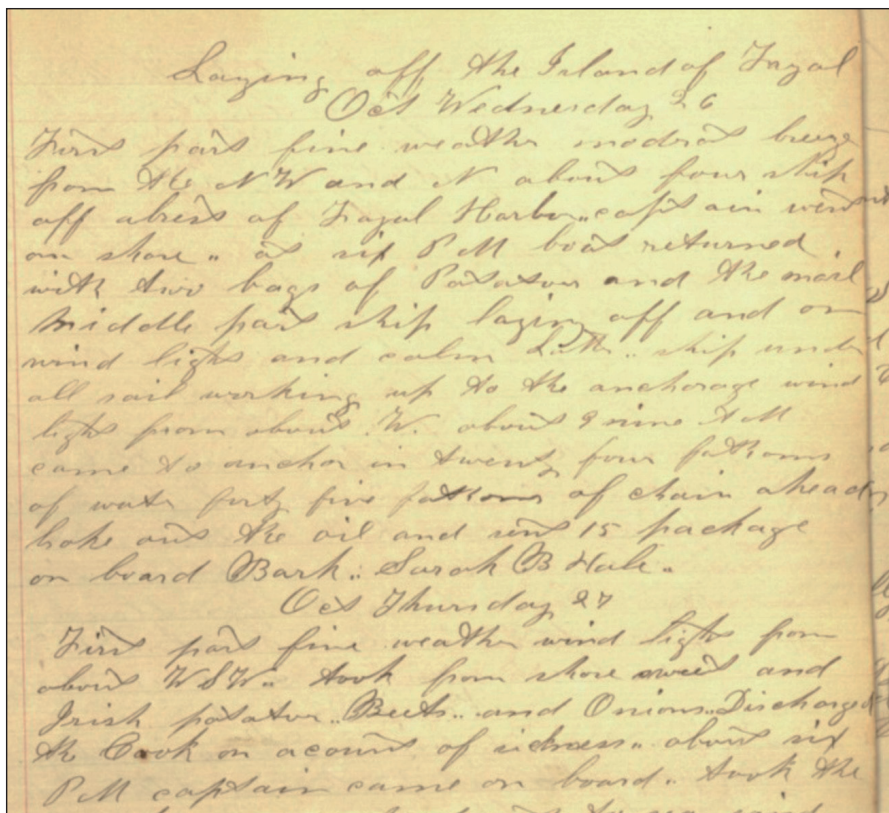
Monday 28th

Commences with fine weather and wind S.S.W. heading by the wind W the SW end of Pico bearing NW Distant 20 miles at 7 PM the wind hauled to the W standing by the wind to the S at 12 Midnight tacked to the NW at Daylight the Island-Peak of Pico bearing N by W at 7 AM saw the town of Fayal bearing NNW at 10 AM lowered the Larboard boat and the Capt went on shore, three ships laying off and on, the Wm Hamilton of N Bedford 18 Days out the Washington of Sag Harbor the Mozart of Bremen so ends all hands employed on ships Duty.

While at times log entries regarding the Azores were brief in description, limited to just provisions and food brought on board, it must have been a welcome reprieve to step onto dry

land if only briefly. Such an example can be seen below in an excerpt from the Log from the 12th Voyage dated from the autumn of 1881.

Log 149 – Voyage 12 of the *Charles W. Morgan*: October 25-29, 1881



Laying off the Island of Fayal

October Wednesday 26

First part fine weather. Moderate breeze from the NW and N about four ships off of Fayal Harbor, capt. went on shore.. at six PM boat returned with two bags of potatoes and the mail...

October Thursday 27

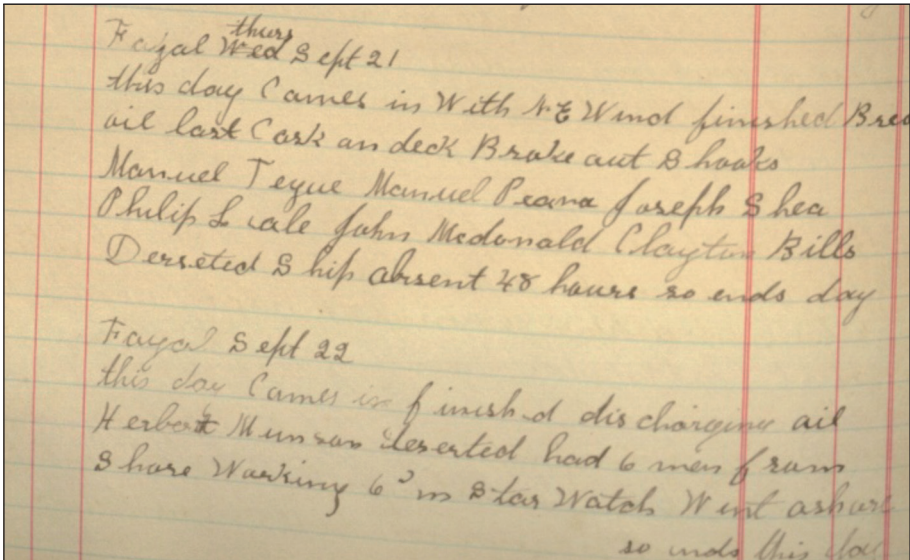
First part, fine weather; wind light from about WSW. Took from shore sweet and Irish potatoes, Beets and Onions. Discharged the cook on account of sickness. about six PM the captain came on board...

©Mystic Seaport, Log 149

Daily entries recorded in the log-books testify that the Azores also represented a tempting opportunity for many (often the green hands) to abandon their commitment to whaling altogether. A perfect example of this situation is represented in Log 157 from the *Charles W. Morgan* captained by Charles S. Church. On September 17, 1911 upon arrival to the Island of Fayal, the 4th Mate and Boat header, referred to as “Mr. Til-

ton,” was taken to the hospital for examination. His condition must have been quite serious, and he must have been a highly regarded member of the crew, as the *Morgan* remained in Fayal well into October of 1911, giving ample opportunity for the seamen to mull over their commitment. Then on September 22nd, while still anchored off Fayal, several men took advantage of this respite, and abandoned their jobs, fellow crew mem-

Log 157 – Voyage 33 of the *Charles W. Morgan*: September, 1911



©Mystic Seaport, Log 157

Fayal, thurs. Sept. 21

this day comes in with NE wind, finished Breaking oil last cask on deck Brake out Shooks Manuel Tegue Manuel Peana, Joseph Shea Phillip Lale John Mcdonald Clayton Bills Deserted Ship absent 48 hours so ends day

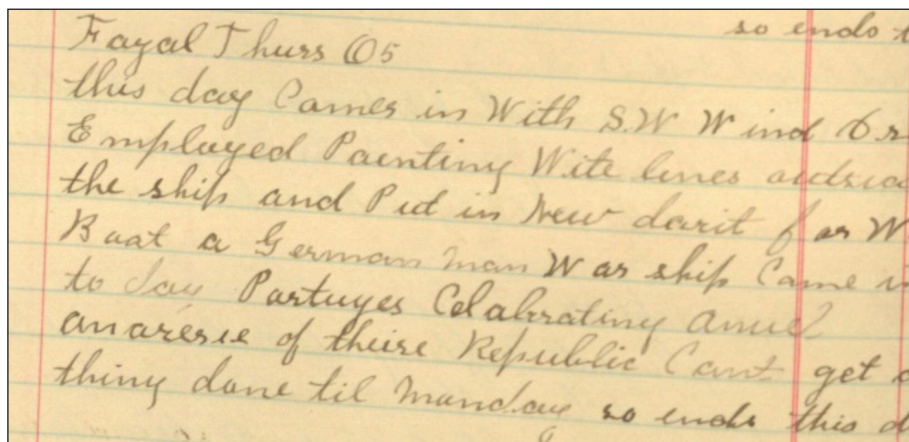
Fayal Sept. 22

this day Comes in finished discharging oil Herbert Munson deserted had 6 men from Shore working 6 PM Star Watch Went ashore so ends this day

bers, and the *Morgan*. Unsurprisingly four of the six men who deserted listed in the original crew list were green hands and the other two men had the title of seamen. As the days progressed additional men slipped away from the *Charles W. Morgan* ultimately leaving Captain Church in a bind. There is no mention in this log of his success in recruiting new members from Fayal, however the

final crew list for this voyage contains fifty seven names including Captain Church's wife, Charlotte, who served as the Assistant Navigator. A significant proportion of the surnames on the list were Portuguese in descent, so we can assume with some degree of accuracy that Church was in fact successful in hiring native Islanders to complete his staffing needs.

Log 157- Voyage 33 of the *Charles W. Morgan*: September, 1911



©Mystic Seaport, Log 157

Fayal, Thursday October 5

this day comes in With SW wind Crew Employed Painting White lines outside the ship and Put in new davit for Waist boat a German Man War ship Came in to day Portuges Celebrating annual aniversario of there Republic Cant get anything done til Monday so ends this day

AZOREAN CONNECTIONS IN THE ART & OBJECTS COLLECTIONS AT MYSTIC SEAPORT

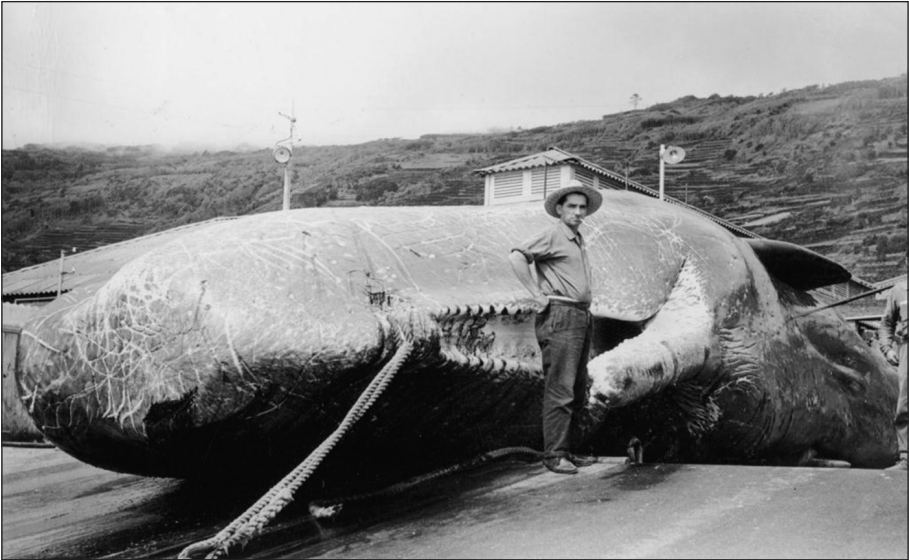
The art and objects collection at Mystic Seaport is vast and includes 3,500 paintings and prints, 1,000 nautical

instruments, 1,150 ship models, 1,500 pieces of scrimshaw and roughly 100 figureheads. The earliest object in the

collection dates from 1570, but the bulk of collection originates from the mid 19th through to the late 20th centuries. Connections to the Azores can be found throughout this collection: in photographs, models and plans,

oral histories and other types of material culture.

One interesting Azorean link in the Art and Objects collection centers on a collection of a set of photographs and teeth from the town of Lajes do Pico.



©Mystic Seaport, 1965.889.1

The man featured in this photograph, Antonio Viera Soares, was the harpooner that struck this massive sperm whale while whaling off of the Azores on the 7th of May 1965. The whale was taken by the whaleboat *Diana*; Manuel Joaquim Machado, Master. This collection, 1965.889, features six photographs of the leviathan; the town of Lajes do Pico, and of processing the whale. This particular photograph shows the large bull

on the ramp in Lajes, close to where the Museu dos Baleeiros is now. The whale was approximately 59 feet long and weighed 59 to 60 tons. The complete set of 45 teeth from this whale is also in the Mystic Seaport collection. (Pictured below.)

Another item with connections to the Azores is this large platter (pictured below), 1949.1518. According to the donor, this platter, as well as another was brought to the United States by



©Mystic Seaport, 1965.889.7-.51

Loum Snow III, who had the platters made. A letter from the donor states: “Grandpa Snow, after whaling and gone the way of the blessed, turned to importing from the Azores: pottery, straw furniture, linen and probably rum, and of course immigrants came on the boats too. The boats were of course the whaling vessels [sic] still sailable, the Brak [sic] Veronica was one of them. His sister Annie drew designs for the edges of the pottery. Then one time someone wanted a platter that would accommodate a turkey that wouldn’t spill everything over the edges while the carver was busy and Grandpa asked the Maderia [sic] potters to make some.” While the scene doesn’t exactly depict what

is purported to be the port of Fayal, the contemporary observer must accept that the artist might have taken some artistic license with the piece. Other related objects include an Azorean whaleboat model (1959.474), Azorean whaleboat plans, an oil painting of an Azorean whaling scene by Gualter M. Barreto of Lajes do Pico (1965.1069), miniature scrimshaw items (1955.432) and a dramatic painting of the rescue of Maria Carlotta, a 3-masted schooner from Lisbon, Portugal. (1951.419)

Mystic Seaport is a museum that strives to inspire an enduring connection to the American maritime experience. Walking through the vault storage in the Collections and



©Mystic Seaport, 1949.1518.

Research Center, it is evident that the maritime history of the United States has been touched by countries and cultures throughout the world, the Azores included. Through preserva-

tion and care of these collections and especially through the *Charles W. Morgan*, we have the opportunity to share these stories of our connections to the sea for generations to come.