

First Person: The 38th Voyage



This is our inaugural installment in an ongoing series devoted to “First Person” experiences with early American culture. We envision “First Person” features as an exploration of what it means to inhabit history in extraordinary ways. What alchemy occurs when we set sail on a whaling ship, put on period clothing, perform the words and deeds of an earlier life? In short, what happens when we put our bodies in the very spaces we’ve spent so much time reading about? Of course, we all know that we can’t really feel what our subjects felt, but this feature thinks critically about our desire to do just that.

This issue’s First Person feature includes accounts from three of the voyagers on *Morgan’s* 38th Voyage, a remarkable event that invited scholars, writers, and artists to voyage on a nineteenth-century whaler. The Mystic Seaport’s [Website](#) provides excellent material on the event, as described below:

In the summer of 2014 the 1841 whaleship Charles W. Morgan sailed for the first time in more than 80 years. During this 38th Voyage, 85 individuals from a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds sailed aboard the ship and participated in

an unprecedented public-history project. This select group, which included artists, historians, scientists, journalists, teachers, musicians, scholars, and whaling descendants, used their own perspectives and talents to document and filter their experience and will produce a creative product for Mystic Seaport to share with the public.

While rooted in history, the 38th Voyage was not a reenactment, but an opportunity to add to the *Morgan's* story with contemporary perspectives. The 38th Voyagers sailed aboard one voyage leg (one night plus the following day) and worked alongside Museum staff, examining every aspect of the journey to better understand the past experiences of those who sailed this ship and others like her."

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