

# THE BARREL BLOG

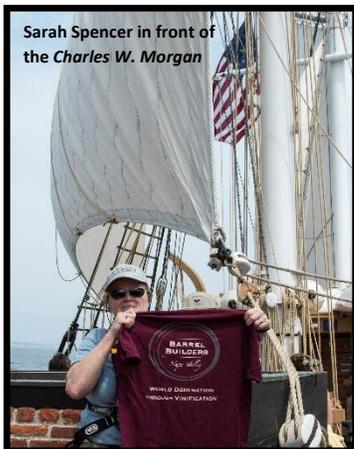
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## RESTORATION OF CHARLES W. MORGAN: the last of the American Whaling Fleet

When Phil Burton, President of Barrel Builders and long-time sailing enthusiast, was approached by Sarah Spencer, Group Sales Manager at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut, to help procure barrels to be used on the restored *Charles W. Morgan* whaling ship he quickly agreed. He grew up on the water and jumped at the chance to be part of this historic maritime restoration project. The *Charles W. Morgan* is the last of an American whaling fleet that once numbered more than 2,700 vessels. It was built and launched in 1841 from New Bedford, Massachusetts. According to Mystic Seaport's website, the whaleship measures 106 feet, 11 inches length on deck with her beam measuring 27 feet, 9 inches. Her main truck is 110 feet above the deck; fully-rigged she carries 7,134 square feet of sail. She was retired in 1921 and came to Mystic Seaport in 1941. In November 2008 the *Morgan* returned to the Museum's shipyard for restoration.



The restoration team wanted every aspect of the ship to be as accurate as possible.



When the *Charles W. Morgan* was a functioning whaling ship she was equipped with wooden barrels that were used for everything from water to whale oil. Every ship had a cooper, responsible for constructing, repairing, and maintaining all the casks on board. Because virtually everything was stored in casks, including the valuable whale oil, the cooper's job was vital and they were a highly valued member of the crew. To ensure that the ship was period appropriate the restoration team needed casks. Sarah Spencer turned to Phil to help find the barrels needed since they went back more than 30 years and had he had helped them organize the cooperage in their 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Seafaring Village.

After some searching Phil, with the help of Neal Family Vineyards, Sharp Hill, and Auburn Road found them 25 500L puncheons that were as close as you could hope to get to casks you would find on a whaling boat without custom making them (which came with a hefty price tag).

They were a bit smaller than the ones you would typically find on a period ship,

holding 135 gallons rather than the historic 158-200 gallons. The casks ended up being functional as well as aesthetic; holding life vests and other less than accurate period items. The *Charles W. Morgan* is meant to be like going back in time and feeling like you're on a 19<sup>th</sup> century whaling ship, which would be difficult with fire extinguishers mounted on the wall.



On July 21, 2013, 5 years after the start of *Charles W. Morgan's* renovation, "she left port for her 38<sup>th</sup> voyage to historic ports of New England. The nearly three-month long journey raised awareness of America's maritime heritage and called attention to issues of ocean sustainability and conservation. The ship returned to Mystic Seaport on August 6, 2014 and has resumed her role as an exhibit and the flagship of the Museum" (*Charles W. Morgan*). Barrel Builders was honored to be part of this amazing project.



To learn more about the *Charles W. Morgan* visit:

Charles W. Morgan: The Last Wooden Whaleship in the World.

<http://www.mysticseaport.org/visit/explore/morgan/>.

