

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

STATE:  
**Connecticut**

COUNTY:  
**New London**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY DATE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) All entries complete applicable sections

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**The Charles W. Morgan**

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
**The Charles W. Morgan**

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Mystic Seaport, Greenmanville Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Mystic**

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
**Second**

STATE:  
**Connecticut**

CODE:  
**09**

COUNTY:  
**New London**

CODE:  
**011**

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

| CATEGORY<br>(Check One)  | OWNERSHIP   | STATUS   | ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC   |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> District<br><input type="checkbox"/> Site<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Object<br><input type="checkbox"/> Building<br><input type="checkbox"/> Structure<br><input type="checkbox"/> Object | <input type="checkbox"/> Public<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private<br><input type="checkbox"/> Both   | Public Acquisition:<br><input type="checkbox"/> In Process<br><input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied<br><input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress<br>Yes:<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted<br><input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted<br><input type="checkbox"/> No |
| PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)   |   |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural<br><input type="checkbox"/> Commercial<br><input type="checkbox"/> Educational<br><input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment   | <input type="checkbox"/> Government<br><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial<br><input type="checkbox"/> Military<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum | <input type="checkbox"/> Park<br><input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence<br><input type="checkbox"/> Religious<br><input type="checkbox"/> Scientific | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____  |

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**Mystic Seaport, Inc.**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Greenmanville Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Mystic**

STATE:  
**Connecticut**

CODE:  
**09**

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**U.S. Department of Transportation**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Office of the U.S. Coast Guard**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**New London**

STATE:  
**Connecticut**

CODE:  
**09**

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**none known**

DATE OF SURVEY:  
 Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Connecticut  
COUNTY: New London  
ENTRY NUMBER  
DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

|           |   |                                    |                                |  |                                |                                    |
|-----------|---|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| CONDITION | (Check One)                                   |                                    |                                |  |                                |                                    |
|           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> Good      | <input type="checkbox"/> Fair  | <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated  | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins | <input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed |
|           | (Check One)                                   |                                    |                                | (Check One)                            |                                |                                    |
|           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered   | <input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered | <input type="checkbox"/> Moved | <input type="checkbox"/> Original Site |                                |                                    |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Charles W. Morgan is the only wooden whaleship surviving from the nineteenth-century fleet of American whalers. Built in 1841 at the shipyard of Jethro and Zachariah Hillman in New Bedford, Massachusetts, the vessel cost \$48,849.85 to construct. Built of live oak in her frame and plank, and yellow pine in her upper decks, the Morgan was the usual rounded-bow and square-rigged whaler of the period. Launched July 21, 1841, she carried no cannon but had false gunports, painted in black on her sides, to scare off would-be pirates.

Launched as a full-rigged ship, with single topsails, the Morgan was rerigged and outfitted in 1867 as a bark, and modernized to a topsail rig in 1881. Eighty years and thirty-seven voyages after her launching, the Morgan, in 1921, was the setting for two films, and then was abandoned in the harbor of Fairhaven, Massachusetts until 1924. Colonel Green, wealthy grandson of early owner Edward Mott Robinson, rescued the vessel and exhibited her, embedded in sand, at Round Hill, South Dartmouth, Massachusetts.

Following Colonel Green's death, the Morgan was left without funds for maintenance. In 1941 the Marine Historical Association bought her and brought her to Mystic Seaport, where she was again embedded in a gravel basin. Because of years without proper maintenance, the Morgan needed extensive repairs by 1941. So she was given new masts, bowsprit, bow, and other sections were rebuilt. Since 1941 she has been carefully studied and maintained and is currently in the midst of a complete restoration.

In 1968 the Morgan was "rigged down," and the heavy yards which held her sails were removed to take strain off the hull during restoration work. A major project was the strengthening of the "tween deck", below the main deck and a major strength member. In this area the deteriorated ends of beams were replaced and braced by knees, which are angular pieces of wood cut from hackmatack trees using the strong, natural angle of the trunk and one major root. In addition the protective copper was stripped from the hull which was caulked and cemented. The main deck was also caulked and a variety of projects were begun to restore all the details of the vessel, beginning with the basic structural elements, and including furnishings and fittings throughout the ship.

In 1973 the Morgan was refloated for the first time in 32 years, then was hauled out, caulked, painted and resheathed at the Henry B. duPont Preservation Shipyard at Mystic Seaport, only a short distance downstream. Rerigged as a topsail bark, the Morgan was relaunched June 22, 1974 and moored at Chubb's Wharf, a newly constructed cement pier, where she will remain as a floating exhibit. With a large amount of the most critical and difficult restoration of the wooden hull and decks complete, preservation and restoration of the Morgan is continuing.

(Continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1841-1921**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal          | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric         | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic            | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture         | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture        | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications      | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation        |   |  | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Charles W. Morgan is the world's only extant nineteenth-century wooden whaling vessel. As such, the three-masted whaler is a valuable inheritance from both the era of American whaling and the age of sail.

The Morgan was built in New Bedford, Massachusetts, America's major whaling port after 1840. Work on the ship began early in 1841, at the shipyard of Jethro and Zachariah Hillman. A strike by the yard's workmen on April 19 delayed progress on the vessel and the men remained away from work for nearly a month, demanding among other things, a ten hour day. May 5 they accepted a ten and one-half-hour day and returned to the ways.

On July 21, 1841 the Morgan was launched. She bore the name of her principal owner, Charles Wain Morgan, who held a prominent position in the dominant mercantile group of New Bedford. Morgan retained his interest in her only until 1848. A later owner controlled the Morgan for a much longer time, from 1863 through 1912.

The Morgan was launched during the peak years of the whaling industry. At that time, whale products were used for candles, whale oil lamps, cosmetics, buggy whips, canes, parasols, and corset stays. And as the nation became industrialized, whale oil also filled the need for a fine lubricant. With the development and refinement of petroleum, however, the demand for whale oil decreased and the industry declined rapidly in this country. Twentieth-century whaling methods also cut drastically into the whale population and therefore, on December 31, 1971 whaling and the importation of whale products by U.S. firms was prohibited in an effort to save this "fascinating mammal" from extinction.

The Morgan completed her last whaling voyage in May 1921. By that time she had killed more than 2,500 whales, brought to port over 50,000 barrels of oil, 150,000 pounds of whalebone, and, it is estimated, earned about \$2,000,000 for her various owners. Only two of her many voyages failed to be profitable.

(Continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Marion Dickerman, The Story of the Last of the Old Whalers, "Charles W. Morgan" (Mystic, Conn., 1949).  
 Giles M. S. Tod, The Last Sail Down East (Barre, Mass., 1965).  
The Log of Mystic Seaport, 13 (July, 1961).  
The Story of Mystic Seaport and the Marine Historical Association, Inc.  
The Charles W. Morgan (Mystic, Conn., n.d.).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

| LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES<br>DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY |                         |                         | O<br>R | LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES<br>DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY<br>OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES |                         |  |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------|---|-------------------------|--|
| CORNER   | LATITUDE                | LONGITUDE               |        | LATITUDE  | LONGITUDE               |  |
|  | Degrees Minutes Seconds | Degrees Minutes Seconds |        | Degrees Minutes Seconds   | Degrees Minutes Seconds |  |
| NW   | ° ' "                   | ° ' "                   |        | ° ' "   | ° ' "                   |  |
| NE   | ° ' "                   | ° ' "                   |        | ° ' "   | ° ' "                   |  |
| SE   | ° ' "                   | ° ' "                   |        | ° ' "   | ° ' "                   |  |
| SW   | ° ' "                   | ° ' "                   |        | ° ' "   | ° ' "                   |  |

UTM 19.251970.4583070

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: N/A

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|--------|------|--------|------|
|        |      |        |      |
|        |      |        |      |
|        |      |        |      |
|        |      |        |      |

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
 Blanche Higgins Schroer, Landmark Review Project; 1967 S. Sydney Bradford

ORGANIZATION: Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service      DATE: Dec. 11, 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 1100 L Street NW.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington      STATE: D.C.      CODE: 11

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)  
 Designated: Nov. 13, 1966

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Boundary Certified:  
Carmelene Laine 7-17-75

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Chief, Hist. & Arch. Surveys      date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Boundary Affirmed: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeps \_\_\_\_\_  
 Director, OAHF      date \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

|                  |             |      |
|------------------|-------------|------|
| STATE            | Connecticut |      |
| COUNTY           | New London  |      |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |             |      |
| ENTRY NUMBER     |             | DATE |
|                  |             |      |

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

7. Description: (1)

The Charles W. Morgan

When restoration is complete, the deck plan should be approximately the same as it appears on the plans enclosed with this report, and as it was before they began to work on the "tween deck" area. On the starboard side of the main deck, toward the stern is the after deckhouse (or "roundhouse"), then the galley, then in one corner of the stern is the bos'n's locker for the storage of rigging tools and spare equipment, while in the opposite corner is the officers' "head" (w.c.) and adjacent to that on the port side is the stairway leading below. Forward on the main deck are the brick tryworks where the oil was cooked out of the whole blubber in the two trypots, then cooled and stored in barrels. Forward of the mast is the windlass for heaving up the anchor and also hoisting aboard the chunks of blubber cut from the whale.

Farthest aft on the lower deck is the captain's day cabin with built-in sofa, and opening off it on the starboard side is the captain's sleeping cabin with its gimballed swinging berth, wash basin and head in a closet at the after end, high up under the deck. This swinging berth in the Morgan was ordered by Captain Tom Landers, master in 1864, so that he could persuade his wife to accompany him on the voyage.

There is a large central compartment with a built-in table and seats and opening off it on the starboard side is the steward's pantry or officers' mess room. On the port side is the chief mate's room, with writing desk and berth. Forward of it is a stateroom with upper and lower berths for the second and third mates. Forward of the officers' mess is the "steerage," room of the fourth mate, when there was one, and of the boatsteerers (harpooners) and other petty officers. When the Morgan was a working ship, this compartment could only be reached from the "booby hatch" forward of the mizzin mast. However, in order to let visitors through, doors have been put between the officers' quarters and the blubber room. The forecastle, with berths for 20 men was all the way forward. In the blubber room are two hatches leading down from the upper hold to the lower hold where the barrels of whale oil, etc. were stored.

Boundary

The boundary of the Morgan, now floating, is the dimensions of the vessel. It is moored at the new, specially built, Chubb's Wharf, on the Mystic River, within the property of Mystic Seaport, Inc. Since the vessel will probably remain at Chubb's Wharf, except for very infrequent trips to the drydock downriver, the present mooring is plotted on the enclosed U.S.G.S. map.

The dimensions of the Morgan are recorded as: length 105.6 feet, beam 27.7 feet, depth of hold 17.6 feet. Length overall (l.o.a.) is 133 feet.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

|                  |      |
|------------------|------|
| STATE            |      |
| Connecticut      |      |
| COUNTY           |      |
| New London       |      |
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| ENTRY NUMBER     | DATE |
|                  |      |

(Number all entries)

8. Statement of Significance: (1)

The Charles W. Morgan

Her logs record how many times her lookouts sighted whales and caused the Morgan's whaleboats to set out in pursuit of them. After a successful pursuit, the crew began the laborious task of cutting away the blubber, cooking it down in the tryworks on the main deck, and filling and storing barrels of oil in the holds of the ship.

Before her retirement the Charles W. Morgan was home to more than 1,000 whalemen. Twenty-one different masters commanded the vessel. Crews averaged thirty-three men per voyage, including officers, seamen, greenhands and "idlers"--the cooper, carpenter, cook, steward, and ship's boy, who remained aboard to keep the ship headed toward the boats while they were down for a whale. The "lay system," whereby each crew member received a certain percentage of a voyage's profits, usually allotted a 1/12 to a 1/16 lay to the captain, and proportionately smaller lays to the rest of the officers and crew. The smallest lay was that of the cabin boy, 1/300.

The Morgan pursued whales for almost eighty years. Captain Thomas Norton, thirty-four years old, took the ship on her first voyage. With a crew numbering thirty, twelve of whom were between fifteen and nineteen, the Morgan sailed from New Bedford on September 6, 1841. She returned on January 1, 1845. At her dock she unloaded 1,600 barrels of sperm oil, 800 barrels of right whale oil, and 10,000 pounds of whalebone. Out of the gross receipts of \$69,591, the captain's lay amounted to almost \$11,000. With that largess, he retired from the sea.

Years of whaling followed for the Morgan. On her third voyage, which began on June 5, 1849, and ended on May 27, 1853, her crew beat off an attack in the South Seas by a group of man-eating natives. In 1887 the Morgan began to sail out of San Francisco and hunt whales off the coast of Japan. The whaler returned to New Bedford as her home port on August 11, 1906. After docking in New Bedford upon completing a voyage on May 10, 1911, the Morgan stayed in port for three years. Then, on September 5, 1916, the vessel took to the sea on her next to last voyage, to hunt for sea elephants, and she returned later in 1917. She began her thirty-seventh and final whaling voyage in September, 1920, and completed it on May 28, 1921. When the last of her cargo of 700 barrels of sperm oil had been lifted from her hold, the Charles W. Morgan's future was uncertain. She sailed once more, when the motion picture, "Down to the Sea in Ships," was made in 1922, but then was forgotten.

Apparently left to rot, the Morgan's good luck saved her from becoming an abandoned hulk. Colonel E. H. R. Green purchased the ship in 1925 and docked her at his estate at South Dartmouth, Massachusetts. Some years after his death, the present owner acquired her and in November 1941, towed her to Mystic. Her restoration, extensive and now nearing completion, visitors may tour the last whaler, which for so many decades hunted the "Leviathan...the dragon that is in the sea."