
THE WHALE WATCH

Descendants of Whaling Masters, Inc.

Summer 2024



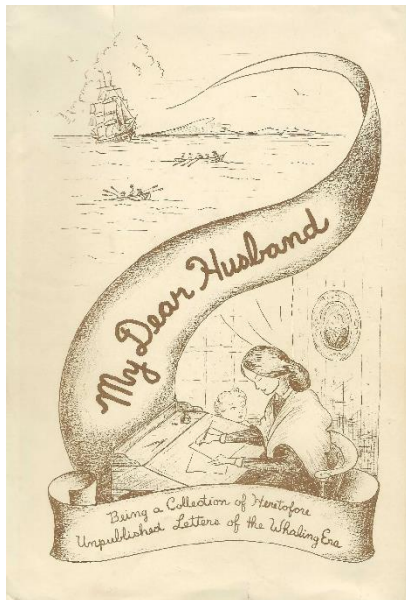
Our Golden Jubilee

Highlights of a 50-year Voyage

The impetus for creating the Descendants of Whaling Masters (DWM) is credited to Dorothy Leavitt Howland, who without a whaling master of her own, still saw the importance of such a group to preserve this singular era in America's maritime history.

DWM was officially launched on 23 October 1974, when our bylaws were accepted. Our first officers were elected in June 1975, when Dorothy's niece, Ellen D. Howland, granddaughter of Captain George Lyman Howland, was installed as our first chairman.

The Descendants met three times a year. In addition to the annual meeting, interesting programs were presented at the spring and fall meetings, each prefaced by a brief business meeting and closed with a social hour. (Much later in 1996 they were discontinued due to dwindling attendance.)



THE BOOK

With an initial membership of 152, it became apparent that dues alone would not fund the goals of our nascent organization. Descendant Genevieve M. Darden began the daunting task of preparing a book for publication by compiling and editing numerous family letters donated by our members. In June 1980 Genevieve's 96-page hardcover book "*My Dear Husband: Being a Collection of Heretofore Unpublished Letters of the Whaling Era*" was released with over half of the books being sold within the first year.

THE CUP PLATE VENTURE

For our second challenge we commissioned a Pairpoint cup plate, designed by member Nathalie Tallman Blaha and titled "There Go Flukes." In October 1982 our plate (#184) was released in clear and light green. Orders in teal and copper blue followed to keep up with demand. For ten years the little cup plates provided a welcome source of revenue.

THE PORTRAITS

In the spring of 1979 DWM agreed to assist the New Bedford Whaling Museum in restoring their portrait of whaling Captain Isaac Chase Howland. As hoped, proceeds from *My Dear Husband* allowed us to help with two more portraits. Since that time we have continued to help fund the Museum's portrait conservation efforts. The twelve whaling portraits that have been fully restored can be viewed on our [website](#).

NEW BEDFORD BICENTENNIAL (1787-1987)

A generous grant from the Globe Fund of the *Boston Globe* allowed DWM to participate in the New Bedford Bicentennial with a project of our own: the “Chip off the Old Bark” paperweight. The Lucite disk was imbedded with a chip of flooring from an old New Bedford store that had originally been planking on the bark *America*. The *America's* claim to fame was the shocking discovery of a woman crew member, George Weldon.

THE WHALE WATCH

Our humble newsletter made its debut as “*The Captain's Journal*” in April 1990. A naming contest, won by member Joan Carver, bestowed upon us the title “*Whale Watch*.” A combination of logbook and journal, the “*Whale Watch*” continues to keep our nationwide membership connected. Today members can even opt to receive the newsletter electronically.

BEREFT

The sudden unexpected death of our chairman Ellen D. Howland on 28 April 1999 devastated all who knew and worked with her. For almost two decades she had faithfully led our organization from its inception. The Wholleys, Marion and Tom, took the helm together in her place. The search for a fitting memorial resulted in a beautifully crafted wooden desk, created by the Adriance Furniture Makers of South Dartmouth, to replace an old sign-in desk at the Whaling Museum. A dedication ceremony held on 20 July 1995 was hosted by the Museum, where Ellen's memorial desk is still in use today.



SILVER JUBILEE

Our 25th Anniversary was celebrated at the 1999 annual meeting and luncheon with a very special performance of “*Whaling Letters*” by Ray Veary and Lucy Bly. Dressed in period costume, they presented an engaging dramatic reading from Genevieve's book “*My Dear Husband*.” Our meeting also included the landmark vote to open our membership to descendants of whalers through a newly created Crew category.

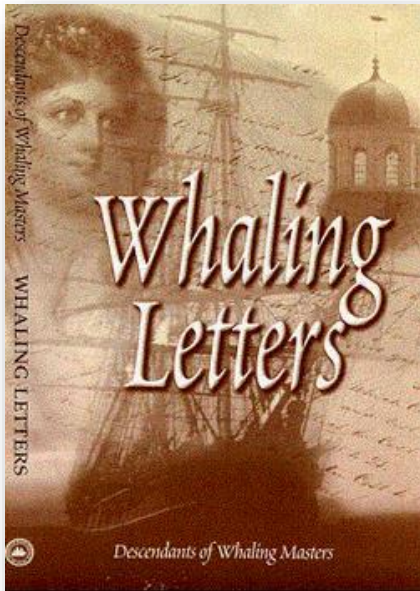
Our second event, an anniversary outing to Nantucket in October, was well attended and enjoyed by fifty-one descendants.

Yankee magazine included an article on DWM in their November 1999 issue, noting our recent membership change. The article generated over one hundred inquiries from across the country!

MEET US AT THE ROCK



For eleven years, beginning in 2001, a dedicated group of Descendants manned a booth at the Mattapoissett Harbor Days Festival in Shipyard Park, peddling wares and promoting membership. The “rock” was a monument to the shipbuilders of Mattapoissett, and our booth was right nearby. Sailor's rope bracelets were the all-time best seller, along with books, copper whale cookie cutters, sea life figurines and ball caps; each year outselling the last. Worthy of note, it never once rained on us although temperatures did reach a sweltering 108 degrees in 2008.



BOOK CELEBRATION

On 13 November 2003 DWM celebrated the official release of “*Whaling Letters*” (formerly titled “*My Dear Husband*”) at the Whaling Museum. Over 100 people attended our event, which featured Ray Veary and Lucy Bly’s dramatic reading from the “*Letters*.” Out of print since 1985, Genevieve’s book was brought back for a new generation of readers. A title change had been made to better define the book’s content, and an eye catching, whaling-themed photo montage was chosen for the cover. Our paperback edition is available to this day in museum stores, independent bookshops and in our own gift shop.

CHARLES W. MORGAN HOMECOMING

By far, the most memorable event in our history was the return of the whaling bark *Charles W. Morgan* to New Bedford. One year into her restoration we were treated to a personal tour of the *Morgan* by Matthew Stackpole and Quentin Snediker for our 2009 Fall Outing. Updates in our *Whale Watch* kept us informed of her progress throughout restoration. We returned to Mystic in July 2013 to enjoy the festive pre-launch party at the Seaport and to witness the great ceremonial fanfare of the *Morgan’s* return to the waters.

On 25 June 2014 the *Charles W. Morgan* returned to her homeport of New Bedford, the fourth port of call of her historic 38th voyage. The official homecoming ceremony took place on 28 June on the State Pier. Descendants were involved in many facets of the celebration. The festivities continued for DWM as we marked our 40th anniversary gathering with Captain Richard “Kip” Files, the 22nd captain of the *Morgan* as our guest speaker. The entire weekend was exceptionally meaningful for our members, especially Board member Daniel



M. Rodrigues, whose grandfather Captain John Theophilo Gonsalves was the last whaling master of the *Morgan*. Thirty-seven members of DWM have ancestors that sailed on that storied vessel.

IN CONCLUSION

Our voyage has included many events, programs, lectures, book signings and trips that have all contributed to our mission to educate and raise awareness of whaling history and ocean conservancy. But what we treasure the most are the moments spent together, be it at meetings or outings, where we share the joys of comradery and exploration. Let us continue our voyage of discovery together for another 50 years!