

THE TATTOO

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Ships give glimpse into America's past

By ZACH BROKENROPE
The Tattoo

Standing aboard the deck of the *Charles W. Morgan*, a sense of history washes over you. On this deck, men risked their lives hoping to find fortune at sea. On this deck, these same men carved blubber from the whales they killed, sending some breeds of the great mammals to near extinction.

And it is on this deck that the story of early American whaling life emerges, through the labor of more than 1,500 volunteers at Mystic Seaport, Museum of America and the Sea, in Mystic, Conn.

Mystic Seaport, which celebrates its 75th anniversary this year, houses three permanent large ships, and one seasonal steamboat.

Its expansive property is located prominently on the shores of Mystic River. Many of the buildings are authentic, historically restored and presented as they would have appeared during the

seaport's heyday.

The three large ships, the *Charles W. Morgan*, the *Joseph Conrad* and the *L.A. Dunton*, are National Historic Landmarks.

The *Charles W. Morgan*, built in 1841, is the "last wooden whaling ship in the world," said guide Kristen Kuczynski.

The ship, which traveled with a crew of 35 men, would leave for years at a time in search of whales and their valuable blubber. The longest of these trips lasted four years and 11 months - just shy of its fifth year at sea when it returned to port with its precious load, according to Kuczynski.

Seaport staff reenact the process of loading cargo and whale hunting on the *Charles W. Morgan* - the sailors used a small boat and went out in search of the whale - and when they finish the demonstration, ask for volunteers to help haul the smaller craft back on board.

Aboard the *Morgan*, it's possible to travel below deck. The two lower levels of the ship offer an interesting view of what daily life was like for sailors (this writer still has bumps on his head from the numerous times he hit it on the low ceiling) and inspire a true respect for the men that spent their years at sea.

The other two vessels, which are less remarkable but still worth the time, are the *Joseph Conrad* and *L.A. Dunton*.

The seaport took possession of the *L.A. Dunton* in 1968. The 1921 fishing schooner is one of the few left in the world that doesn't run on an engine. Below deck, visitors can see sailor's bunks and the galley kitchen.

The third large vessel in the collection, the *Joseph Conrad*, was built in Denmark in 1882 as a training facility for young Danish sailors. The original mission of the ship lives on today in a different form - it now serves as the dormitory



Zach Brokenrope / The Tattoo

Mystic Seaport's "whaling crew" demonstrates how sailors went in pursuit of a whale.

for the seaport's sailing school.

In July, the seaport hosted another noteworthy ship of historical significance: the *Amistad*. Built at the seaport, the *Amistad* is a reproduction of a Spanish slave ship. Held captive and sailing from their native Sierra Leone in 1839, the Africans aboard were taken to Cuba and sold. The 53 slaves were put aboard the *Amistad* in Cuba and it was then that they overthrew

their captors and took over the ship.

Instead of returning to Africa, the *Amistad* ended up in Connecticut, where a federal trial determined that the captives should go free.

The ships of Mystic Seaport provide an educational and entertaining look at one of America's most productive periods, when the nation was still young, and looking forward to its best days.



Lots to learn on the water

By TEAGUE NEAL
The Tattoo

Sprawled across the idyllic shores of the Mystic River, Mystic Seaport, The Museum of America and the Sea is a recreation of a 19th century fishing village that offers an array of activities and attractions.

"It's three different places, three different ways," said spokesman Michael O'Farrell, describing the seaport as an "attraction, museum, and educational destination."

Mystic Seaport can be divided into a handful of sections to keep things simple on such a large site.

There's a working shipyard that uses authentic 19th century tools to restore older vessels to their glory as well as build replicas of original ships.

Workers at the shipyard built a reproduction of the slave ship *Amistad*, which was launched in 2000 and makes appearances at the museum.

The village is made up of a wide avenue of period houses and shops - including several authentic buildings moved to the site. There's everything from a printing press to a blacksmith shop, church and school.

It's enjoyable to walk along and pop into interesting buildings, touch reproduction pieces made by museum staff and volunteers and see original artifacts.

A variety of landmark ships, including the *Charles W. Morgan*, the last wooden whaling vessel on earth, are docked here.

Nearby are exhibit spaces and small museums that include a variety of pieces including photography, painting, model ships and scrimshaw, which is carved whale bone art that kept 18th and 19th century crews on whaling ships busy in their spare time on the high seas.

Sailing through Mystic Seaport



Zach Brokenrope / The Tattoo

The *Joseph Conrad*, docked at Mystic Seaport.

Along the harbor area near the ships are a couple different boat cruises that visitors can take for an additional fee. But the newly added water taxi, which runs every 15 minutes from one end of the seaport to the other, is a chance to see what the fishing village looks like from the water for free.

"We want to get people on the water," said O'Farrell.

The 10-minute ride on the water taxi takes visitors on the Mystic River between the seaport and the classical and colorful, old New England houses on the other shore, complete with pillars, cornices and gingerbread.

For those who want a longer cruise, just stay on the boat. Unless the taxi is very busy, riders can stay on board for multiple trips.

Mystic Seaport, which also offers restaurants and a large gift shop on the grounds, is an excellent place to escape the future and respect the past.

Maritime sculpture

Figurehead display shows art of the sea

By TEAGUE NEAL
The Tattoo

Many of the world's best-kept treasures are in the unknown, new things in life that take some time to learn about and appreciate.

Ship figureheads are among these treasures, and a great collection of them is on permanent display at Mystic Seaport.

Figureheads are large pieces of wood that were transformed into true treasures by crew members - often the ship's carpenters - who carved them during their spare moments aboard 18th and 19th century ships.

The figureheads were attached to the bow of the ship, gracing the front.

The exhibit contains some truly special art pieces with panache and flair.

The visitor steps into a dimly-lit space lined from floor to ceiling with a wide variety of imposing figureheads.

The figures, depicting people from around the globe, are hung high above the floor, boasting both vibrant and muted colors.

One of the more memorable figureheads is a Scotsman in a traditional red and green tartan. It was once part of the *Donald McKay*, a clipper ship which began sailing in 1855.

Another figurehead from the far flung Far East decorated the *H.M.S. Asia* that ran routes out of Bombay, India. Its figurehead of a man in a turban has incredible detail, which spotlights the immense effort the artists must have put into these masterpieces.

Sharing the space with the first-rate figurehead collection is a small group of impressive model ships. One that really had an interesting use of color



Zach Brokenrope / The Tattoo

The Scotsman figurehead from the clipper ship *Donald McKay* is on display in a gallery at Mystic Seaport.

was an English fourth rate ship with two sets of owners who lived in Connecticut and Massachusetts at the time. That ship set off from New England on a 33,000-mile journey to Japan through the Mediterranean and back again.

During both world wars, the ship served as part of the British Navy.

Beyond the beauty of the figureheads and models, what is intriguing is the eventful and fascinating history of each of these pieces.

Harmony day appeals to all

By GERALDINE SOON
The Tattoo

Kristine Koh, a Chinese student currently studying at Raffles Junior College in Singapore, ditched her smart but oh, so boring school uniform one day last month for a beautiful purple and gold sari.

She wasn't trying to land herself in detention for breaking the school dress code. She was doing exactly what every other student in Singapore did that day - preparing for an island-wide celebration of Racial Harmony Day.

In a world where racial discrimination is still very much alive, Racial Harmony Day holds significant meaning, particularly for everyone here on this multi-racial island.

The July 21 holiday - a day of celebration of Prophet Mohammed's birthday - is held in remembrance of a violent outbreak of race riots in 1964 that left 22 dead and 461 others injured.

In a prepared speech read aloud in schools throughout Singapore on this year's holiday, Minister of State for Education Chan Soo Sen said, "The outbreak of the riots revealed that

planning, clever use of the media and a simple trigger were all the ingredients needed to cause suspicions, distrust, and even animosity amongst Singaporeans."

Racial Harmony Day is celebrated annually at every school in Singapore.

Since then, Racial Harmony Day is celebrated every year, in all schools ranging from primary schools to junior colleges.

On that day, students and teachers are encouraged to come in their own ethnic costumes or in one from another culture.

"The school population looks so colorful," said math teacher Chien Chen Yee, who came to school in a traditional Punjabi suit herself. "I feel like the school has become a walking United Colors of Benneton ad!"

For the students, it was more than color that mattered to them.

"It's really great to see so many of

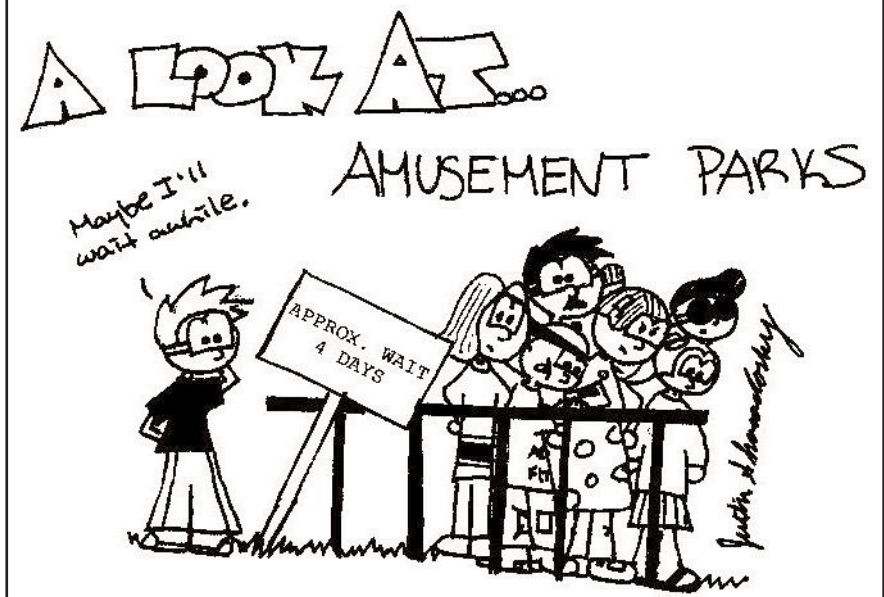
the Chinese girls wearing saris and Punjabi suits," said Amrita Muruthi, who donned a traditional yellow Chinese costume called a qi pao. She said all the cross-cultural dressing "makes me realize how much we respect and appreciate one another's culture and traditions."

At school, there were several food booths set up in the canteen for "free tasting" of traditional foods from different cultures, as well as traditional games like capteh, a game which requires you to keep a rubber-based feathered toy in the air for as long as possible by kicking it.

Racial Harmony Day means more than school celebrations. It reminds Singaporeans of the very social fabric that the country is made of - a country united not by race or religion, but by the people's goal to be one nation, made possible with an open-minded, tolerance and respect for one another.

But not everyone read the deepest meaning into the celebration.

"I wish it was Racial Harmony Day everyday," said Vishal Vijay, another college student. "Everyone looks so much better... especially the babes in saris!"



Justin Skaradosky / The Tattoo

Attention new high school freshmen!

The 2005 edition of our *Insider's Guide to High School* is coming soon, but our archives can help you get rid of the jitters and get a jump on high school even before this year's edition goes to print. Check out sage advice from teens who've been there and done that - at www.ReadTheTattoo.com.

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