

The Friends of Fort Trumbull State Park
Present
“Whaling Wives at Sea and at Home”



“From this time, where he goes, I shall go; and my happiness will be making him a home wherever business calls him.” These were the brave words of Helen E. Brown, a ship captain’s wife, as she explained why she would no longer “live half the globe” away from her husband of 10 years. It is amazing how many intrepid women, during the Golden Age of Whaling, (1840-1860) were willing to ignore society’s disapproval and set sail with their husbands. They were willing to put wifely devotion over comfort and safety to be by the side of their seafaring husbands.

As the CHARLES W. MORGAN- the only surviving wooden whaling ship- prepares to again set sail, after a four-year renovation at Mystic Seaport, Karlee Turner, a role-player at the Seaport, will bring to life what is must have been like for the five wives who called the Morgan their “home at sea” during its eighty years traversing the seven seas in search of whales.

Ms. Turner will portray a composite (fictitious) character- Mrs. Elizabeth Brock- a whaling captain's wife. She will touch upon the experiences of the children who sailed with their mother and father, the dangers of gales and storms which these women endured, the troubles with cooks and stewards they needed to supervise, and the strangeness of Natives whom they met during the voyages. In addition, they needed endurance to cope with the isolation and loneliness of being the only woman aboard a vessel with 28-32 men, a reality which Eugene O'Neill was able to portray in one of his early plays, "Ile".

Ms. Turner earned her BA from Trinity College in Hartford, where she returned as an adult to discover a new passion for history. Eventually, she became a role player at Mystic Seaport. Her research into nineteenth century America and her experiences portraying a whaling wife became the inspiration for her first historical novel- Tryst with Fate, Memoirs of a Sister Sailor. Ms. Turner will appear in an authentic reproduction ensemble.

The presentation will be on Thursday, June 26, 2014, at the Fort Trumbull Conference Center in New London, at 7 p.m. The event is open to the public, but seating is limited. New members are always encouraged and welcome. Refreshments will follow.