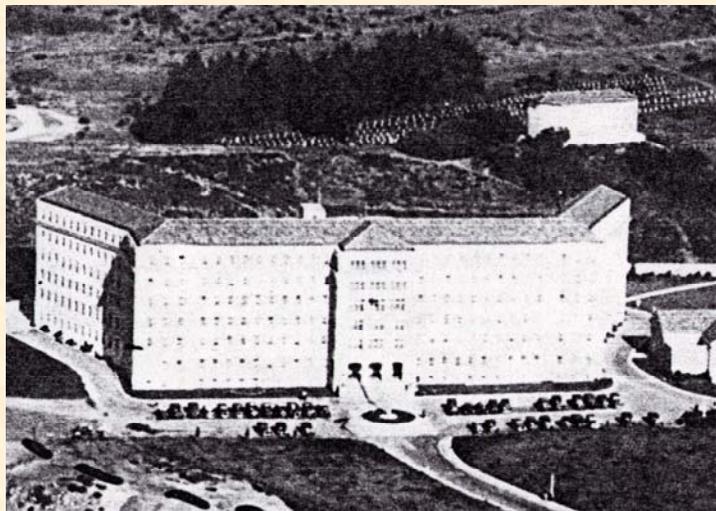


Last Port:

The Marine Hospital Cemetery of San Francisco

The original Marine Hospital of San Francisco was established on the Presidio in 1875. The hospital, and others like it all over the country, were devoted to providing health care for maritime laborers from ports all over the world at no charge. The Marine Hospital on the Presidio became a Public Health Service Hospital in 1902. The old building was replaced by a larger structure (seen in the picture at right) in 1931, and expanded in 1952.



feet of construction fill was dumped on top of it. In 1969, a parking lot was built on top of a portion of the cemetery as well. It wasn't until 1989 that a team investigating hazards at the abandoned hospital re-discovered the cemetery. Since then, archival research and limited archaeological testing has taken place in order to recover the history of the cemetery and its occupants. Research has revealed important information about the lifestyles of 19th century seafarers, the identity of some of the men interred here, and about the land-use practices the cemetery grounds have been subject to over the years.

From 1881 to 1912, the Hospital maintained a cemetery on its grounds for the interment of sailors with no family or money to transport their bodies home.

During this time, over 600 seamen were interred in either redwood coffins or cremation urns.

By the early 1950s, the cemetery was in such bad shape that few people even knew it was there, and over 10

Between 1949 and 1969...



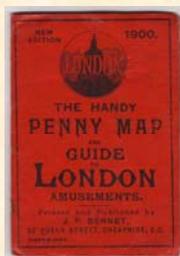
1949 survey map showing the cemetery.



1978 map showing parking lot, built over the cemetery in 1969.

CAUSE OF DEATH

Although death among sailors usually came at sea, by drowning or falling from a great height, records indicate that, along with various kinds of accidents and injuries, many diseases were prevalent among sailors. These include tuberculosis, nephritis, cancer, cirrhosis, diabetes, dysentery, epilepsy, heart disease, hepatitis, pleurisy, pneumonia, sarcoma, syphilis, scurvy, peritonitis, and bronchitis.



PORT OF ORIGIN

Ships came to San Francisco from all over the world, and so did their sailors. Buried in the Marine Hospital Cemetery are men from all over the United States, as well as Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, India, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, Prussia, Russia, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Tahiti, Wales, and the West Indies.



BURIAL PRACTICES

Although little documentation of burial practices at the cemetery exists, we know from an 1896 newspaper article (confirmed by limited archaeological testing) that the sailors were usually buried in their own clothing and redwood coffins. Some were probably cremated, as the hospital had a cremation facility. Historic photos also suggest the presence of wooden gravemarkers, which would have decayed over time.



PERSONAL LIVES

The personal items these sailors left behind tell us a great deal about what was important to them. Most common were reminders of home: letters, photographs, even locks of hair. Proof of their labor was also important, usually in the form of a membership card for a seafarer's union or logs of their vessel assignments. Ways to pass the time in port were also present; several had business cards for local saloons and boarding houses.