

**Stronger Than Family: Framing Modern-Day Seamen as  
Figurative Descendants of Nineteenth Century Merchant Mariners  
Buried at the Presidio of San Francisco**

by

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Date: April 20, 2016

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**Abstract**

**Purpose of the Study:** This thesis tests the hypothesis that, in the absence of known descendants, modern-day merchant mariners can and ought to be considered a descendant community for those buried at a Nineteenth-century Merchant Marine Cemetery (MMC) in the Presidio of San Francisco. Using ethnographic interviews, this project explores interest in learning about the MMC via archaeological methods. This project will help to guide the Presidio Trust as they continue to manage the MMC in trust for the public.

**Methods:** This study used ethnographic principles to develop, conduct and analyze eight ethnographic interviews. The analysis of these interviews provides the data for this thesis.

**Findings:** Analysis of the interviews demonstrates that modern-day seamen ought to be considered a descendant community for the MMC, and argues that, were excavation to occur, the living community would best be served by a bioarchaeological study which focuses on the theme of labor.

**Conclusions:** This project presents a model for using ethnographic interviews to identify a descendant community for a historic cemetery whose inhabitants have no easily identifiable descendants.

Chair:

Alexis Boutin, Ph.D.

MA Program: Cultural Resources Management  
Sonoma State University

Date: April 20, 2016

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

This thesis project had three research objectives. The first was to assess the Merchant Marine Cemetery (MMC)—a nineteenth century cemetery at the Presidio of San Francisco—as a potential site for bioarchaeological research. The second objective was to test the hypothesis that, in the absence of easily identifiable lineal descendants, modern day mariners ought to be considered a figurative descendant community for this site. The third objective was to make suggestions for how any future archaeological research at the site would best serve this descendant community.

In the Spring of 2014, I conducted eight ethnographic interviews with local maritime professionals. The data from these interviews allow me to address the latter two research objectives. A survey of the previous research (primarily archival) conducted by the National Park Service (NPS) and the Presidio Trust (PT) on the MMC and of archaeological research at sites similar to the MMC provides the basis for my assessment of the MMC's potential as an archaeological site (the third research objective). Consequently, I argue that archaeological inquiries at the MMC—a site which is defined at once by the trade of seamanship and as a cemetery—would best be served by a bioarchaeological study of labor which prioritizes the needs and interests of modern day merchant mariners.

### **Relevance to Cultural Resources Management**

The Presidio of San Francisco encompasses some of the most valuable acreage in the United States of America. Located at the mouth of the San Francisco Bay, the Presidio served as a fortified strategic outpost to defend the Port of San Francisco from

naval attack. The Presidio has an extraordinary heritage as a human settlement, with strong remnants of Native American (from prehistory until 1776), Spanish (established 1776), Mexican (1822-1846), and U.S. periods of occupation. As it became militarily obsolete, the Presidio was decommissioned as a military base in 1994. Stewardship of this historic property has been entrusted to the Presidio Trust, an experimental federal corporation charged with preserving and maintaining the land for public use. Cultural resources management (CRM) is a key portion of the Trust's mission and so this entity is an excellent subject for the study of best practices in the management of historic cemeteries.

The Presidio Trust is a unique model of a public-private partnership that maintains a national park site—for public use without fee—with funds generated from private leases to commercial, and residential tenants. The property's spectacular location, climate, views, and proximity to local commerce and culture make it a highly desired site for developments by preeminent developers and philanthropists; however, the Presidio Trust exercises extreme discretion, caution, and conservation in determining what projects it allows to proceed. The Presidio Trust's mission is to preserve, protect, and optimize the natural and cultural resource value for the greatest good of the public at large (Presidio Trust 2002). Cultural resources management is an overarching responsibility of the Presidio Trust: it is a key component of their attitude and mission to preserve, protect, and enhance the Presidio environment. Preserving the cultural heritage of the Presidio and repurposing its historic buildings for new uses generate revenue that fully funds the park, making it the first financially sustainable National Park site in the United States.

This thesis focuses on the MMC, where over 500 merchant mariners from around the world who died in the Marine hospital were buried, from the years 1881-1912. In order to manage this and surrounding land most responsibly, it is the Presidio Trust's responsibility to determine best practices toward managing the cemetery site. I argue that in the process of CRM due diligence (which includes both legal requirements and ethical guidance for how to manage public land), today's Merchant Marine community should serve as figurative descendants of the buried sailors (in the absence of easily-identified lineal descendants) in making any decisions on how to respectfully honor their burial place and in developing any future research at the site. In creating this theoretical framework for identifying a descendant community, and with the roadmap of suggested research routes, this paper aims to help the Presidio Trust chart its course vis-a-vis the MMC, and thereby provide further precedence for how to manage public land under similar circumstances.

### **Organization of Thesis**

My research questions about the MMC fall into one or both of two thematic categories:

1. Questions about its research potential as a bioarchaeological site, and as a site for the anthropological study of labor history.
2. Inquiries into its potential for significance to modern-day merchant mariners, and to the greater public.

The ethnographic data collected in the course of my research address many of the questions from the second category. For the bulk of the questions, though, it will be

necessary to provide some context as to the current scholarly climate in which they are asked. Chapter 2 provides the historical and cultural contexts for the MMC and a brief survey of bioarchaeological work done at several similar sites in the Bay Area. Chapter 3 explores existing research that touches on the defining factors of the site including being a historic-era cemetery that has the potential for bioarchaeological research and which is managed by a government agency with responsibilities to the public. To wit, what bioarchaeological research has been conducted in historic-era cemeteries, and how has it been informed by larger trends in bioarchaeology and archaeology? What are some of the ways that archaeologists are using the material record to explore the history of labor, and how does this relate to examinations of class and status in mortuary archaeology and bioarchaeology? Finally, what connection might this work have to the public, and how are archaeologists thinking about and facilitating that connection? Chapter 4 outlines the methodology for designing and conducting the ethnographic interviews. Chapter 5 uses the data from these interviews to argue that modern day merchant mariners ought to be considered a descendant community for the MMC; that the history of their profession is meaningful to them; and that the MMC is particularly well suited—in a number of ways, including as a potential site for bioarchaeological research—to contributing to that history. Chapter 6 presents recommendations (based on the discussion in Chapter 5), discusses the significance of this thesis project to the anthropological discipline, and suggests further areas for research.

## Chapter 2. Background

This chapter introduces the specific historical and cultural contexts of the Merchant Marine Cemetery (MMC)'s period of use, the circumstances of the MMC's "loss" during a transitional moment for the Presidio, and its rediscovery in the late 1980s. It also provides a brief summary of several comparative case studies of bioarchaeological research done at other San Francisco Bay Area "pauper's graves." These case studies provide a context for the MMCs potential significance as a site for bioarchaeological research and as a site.

### **The Merchant Marine in San Francisco**

Life in mid-nineteenth century San Francisco was closely linked to the shipping industry, yet a mariner's life was notoriously hazardous. The town of San Francisco experienced a massive, rapid population boom following the discovery of gold in 1848, which turned the sedate timber port into a bustling city, struggling (and failing) to keep pace with the increased demands on infrastructure (Bauer 1988:130). This produced a period of great unrest, as many soldiers and sailors abandoned their posts to hunt gold, and vigilante law took the form of drunken parades and lynch mobs (Richards 2007:14, 176). Ethnic tensions fueled much of the unrest, as gold-seekers from around the world funneled into San Francisco and found themselves in competition for basic necessities as well as political influence (Richards 2007:176). Life as a sailor was equally hazardous, though the rules were, at least, clear: prior to 1915, a sailor's life effectively belonged to his captain.

The Merchant Marine, meaning the fleet of privately owned vessels used for commercial shipping, is not under U.S. military command (though vessels and crew can be and have been requisitioned as auxiliary Navy in wartime). However, it has historically been run in a pseudo-military manner, and labor laws concerning the Merchant Marine prior to 1915 emphasized the need for discipline and unquestioning obedience on the part of the crew. Richard Henry Dana famously wrote about the brutal working conditions during his time as a California mariner in 1834. He quotes his captain, who taunts the assembled crew after flogging two sailors for disobedience: “[now] I’ll see who’ll tell me he isn’t a slave!” (Dana 1911:126 [1840]). Life ashore in San Francisco was not much better, as ship captains and boarding-house owners (known as “crimps”) conspired to keep the seamen in a state of what amounted to indentured servitude, through a combination of price gouging, wage theft and violent coercion (Asbury 1933:199-201; Whitehurst 1983:163). The San Francisco red-light neighborhood frequented by sailors in the late nineteenth century (now part of San Francisco’s financial district) was colloquially known as the Barbary Coast, in ironic reference to a coast of the same name in Africa which was famous for rampant slavery and piracy (Asbury 1933:98). At the time, and even in recent histories of the trade, the exploitation and abuse of sailors was legitimized by aspersions on their character. Even Dana, who is seen as a champion of sailor’s rights, referred to them as “the refuse of civilization” (1911:480) while a recent historian describes seamen from the mid-1880s as the “poorest examples of mankind that could be dredged up from the ports of the world” (Bauer 1988:283). In one popular, romanticized account of life in San Francisco’s Barbary Coast the author blithely explains: “It is difficult to understand why the sailors submitted with such

docility to the fearful abuse meted out to them by both runners and crimps. The answer probably lies in the fact that...the vast majority were great stupid, hulking brutes of scant sensitivity and little or no intelligence” (Asbury 1933:210).

By the period of use for the MMC, 1881-1912, as discussed below, U.S. law had changed very little with respect to sailor’s rights. An 1850 act banned the use of flogging on merchant craft and in 1872 the Shipping Commissioners Act attempted to prevent the practice of “shanghaiing” (forcing sailors to sign employment contracts against their will). Tellingly, in the 1897 *Arago* case, the court ruled that the thirteenth amendment’s prohibition against involuntary servitude did not apply to seamen, owing to the nature of life at sea (Bauer 1988:285). It was not until the Seamen’s Act of 1915 that sailors won significant legal protection in the U.S. This act abolished imprisonment for desertion and regulated the safety and living conditions for sailors, among other improvements (Bauer 1988:285).

Working at sea, whether in the nineteenth or twenty-first century, creates a unique lifestyle. In addition to the long periods of isolation and rough amenities, the itinerant nature of the work prevented most sailors of the nineteenth century from keeping a permanent home or starting families. Instead, they were “married to the sea” (Whitehurst 1983:164). Merchant mariners and the governments of nations whose economies depended on them created their own diasporic communities and institutions to meet the needs normally met by a family and hometown.

Norway, for instance, started its own Seamen’s Mission in 1864 and built Norwegian Seamen’s Churches in ports all over the world, including one in San Francisco (Kvale 2011:9). The pastors of these churches ministered to the Norwegian

sailors flooding in and out of port and, eventually, began to run the church as a cultural center and erstwhile home base: “Sailors felt at home, they found recent issues of their local newspapers from Norway, met old friends, wrote letters...Part of the downstairs area soon became a locker room for sailors wanting to leave trunks and suitcases...” (Engvig 1996:79). While many of the Norwegian seamen sailed with non-Norwegian ships and had strong ties to the greater maritime community, they maintained a dual sense of identity: “Many a Norwegian pastor abroad has been sitting at the deathbed of immigrants and listened to their life story. Heard about how they emigrated...and their assimilation into American society. But at the deathbed it was important to see a Norwegian pastor, fold hands and pray Fader Vår, the Lord’s Prayer, not in English but in Norwegian” (Kvale 2011:45).

While Norway’s Seamen’s church was the pre-eminent ethnically based sailor’s aid organization in San Francisco, there were many other groups with their own particular organizing principle or affiliation. Social aid societies (e.g. San Francisco’s Ladies’ Seamen’s Friend Society) simultaneously offered moral guidance and medical care (Bauer 1988:284), while various religious creeds established marine missions around the world, such as the Catholic Stella Maris, Anglican Mission to Seafarers (the Flying Angel Club) and Episcopalian Seamen’s Church Institute. Saloons and boarding houses catering to mariners became most sailors’ homes when in port (Asbury 1933:222). Female companionship was also a part of these saloons, even to the point of marriage (at least according to popular mythology), as in: “[female entertainer] ‘Dago May’ preferred whalers or men of the Merchant Marine, who were less likely to return to San Francisco.

She once boasted that she had twenty husbands scattered throughout the Seven Seas” (Asbury 1933:122).

The United States Marine Hospital Service provided the most consistent medical and funeral services for seamen of all nationalities in American ports. An 1873 report by a British medical doctor advised the creation of a similar medical service in England, separate from the Navy’s, for the British seamen “upon whom the commerce of our country depends” (Smart 1873:429). Part of the difficulty in providing adequate medical care and burial services lay in the question of who would pay for it: the sailor, his country of origin, the nation where he was being treated, or some combination thereof? The doctor writing in 1873 assumed that the funds would come out of the wages of British seamen, though he worried that “the spirit of our mercantile marine [may be] denationalized by the amalgamation of so great a proportion of foreign seamen as now exists” to the point where the seamen might not feel the appropriate willingness to contribute to a national project (Smart 1873:428).

While ethnic divisions among seamen certainly existed, ships were rarely crewed exclusively by one ethnic group and life at sea tended to foster a sense of community based purely on the nature of the work. Dana’s 1834 memoir reveals the paradoxical coexistence of ethnically based prejudices and intense group bonding. He writes of the ship cook’s relief upon discovering that Dana was of German, not Finnish heritage, because “Fins [*sic*] are wizards, and...have power over winds and storms.” He also writes of the impact one crew member’s death by drowning had on the entire ship: “At sea...you miss a man so much. It is like losing a limb. There are no new faces or new scenes to fill up the gap. The effect of it remains upon the crew for some time. There is

more kindness shown by the officers to the crew, and by the crew to one another” (Dana 1911:46-47,43-44).

A sense of being “other,” whether from being misunderstood by or actively excluded from regular society, became a defining feature of Merchant Marine culture. In nineteenth century San Francisco, residents “preferred to keep seamen at a comfortable distance,” and historians of the Merchant Marine recognize that sailors lived a life that “few people ashore [would] understand” (Schwendinger 1977:52; Whitehurst 1983:164). In defiant response to this exclusion, sailors fostered a sense of pride both in the difficulty of their work and in their unusual lifestyle. Sea shanties from the nineteenth century variously praise specific ships and captains, mock new sailors struggling to “find [their] sea legs” and speak with brash casualness of the horrific punishments inflicted on crew at sea (Schwendinger 1977:51-53). Eric Hoffer, though a longshoreman and not a sailor, wrote of the 1960s San Francisco waterfront: “[it] is the only place where I have felt at home. All my life, wherever I went, I felt an outsider. Here I have a strong sense of belonging” (Hoffer 1969:127). Early in the twentieth century, sailors and longshoremen organized into unions, which created another way to express group identity—especially when framed in opposition to the ship-owners. Hoffer and others echoed the sailors’ self-identification as “the rejected” of society, all converging in the “melting pot” of San Francisco’s working waterfront (Hoffer 1969:22; Ward 1940:3). Sailors’ labor-based sense of self even extended to anticipations of a maritime afterlife: Fiddler’s Green, where the souls of mariners enjoyed endless music, rum, tobacco and women (Paine 1919:183-4). In a planning document for San Francisco’s Maritime National Historical Park, the National Park Service lists “Maritime Sociology” as a primary interpretive

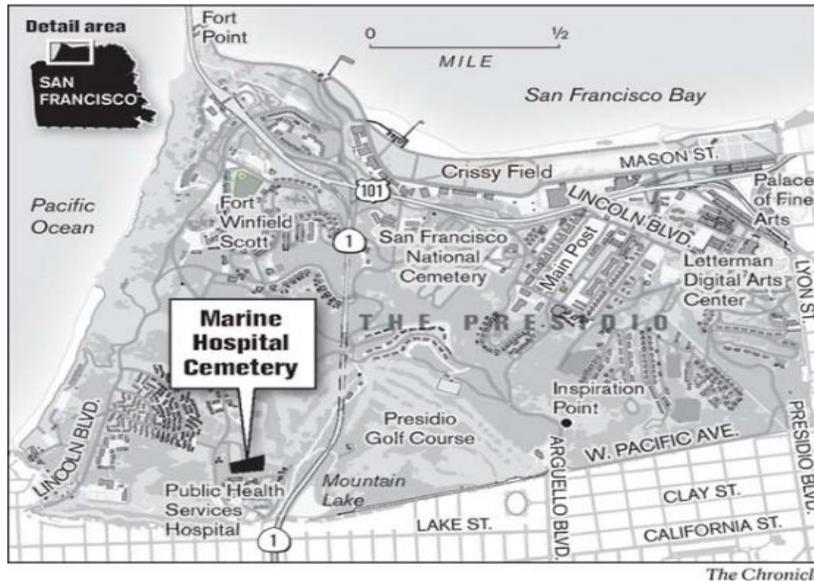
theme, citing “the maritime community[’s]...distinct cultural group, set apart by the nature of its work and often by its own self-identification, from the majority of the shore-bound population. (National Park Service 1996:13). If anyone were in doubt of the National Park Service’s claim, they might read the defiant quote chosen for the inscription on a bust of Andrew Furuseth<sup>1</sup> at the Sailor’s Union of the Pacific in San Francisco. Quoted from a time when Furuseth was struggling to secure labor rights for sailors, it reads: “You can put me in jail, but you cannot give me narrower quarters than as a seamen I have always had. You cannot give me coarser food than I have always eaten. You cannot make me lonelier than I have always been” (Berwick 1993:70). The choice of this quote commemorates but also perpetuates the feeling of social disenfranchisement within San Francisco’s Merchant Marine culture.

### **The Presidio of San Francisco**

The MMC is located within the Presidio of San Francisco in California (Figure 1). The Presidio, a former Army base, is now a National Park sitting at the northern end of the city by the mouth of the San Francisco bay. Its strategic position, ideally situated to guard the entrance to the bay, speaks to its origins as a colonial Spanish outpost and to the primacy of maritime concerns throughout the history of San Francisco.

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<sup>1</sup> One of the founders of the Sailor’s Union of the Pacific and the driving force behind the 1915 Seamen’s Act; often called “the Abraham Lincoln of the Seas.”



**Figure 1. Location of the Hospital and Cemetery (*San Francisco Chronicle*). The Merchant Marine Cemetery has at different times been called the Marine Hospital Cemetery.**

Spanish colonists traveled up the coast from Mexico in 1776 and established the Presidio and Mission of San Francisco as Spain's northernmost outpost in California. Father Pedro Font, a member of the founding expedition, noted in his diary: "the port of San Francisco... is a marvel of nature, and might well be called a harbor of harbors" (Benton 1998:9). The Spanish also established the pueblo of Yerba Buena between the military Presidio and religious Mission. This small pueblo would become the city of San Francisco. The proximity between the city and the military base has been a constant, decisive factor in shaping how the Presidio's land is used.

Despite recognizing San Francisco Bay's strategic importance, Spain became preoccupied with the Napoleonic wars and lost hold of its American possessions. The newly formed Republic of Mexico occupied the Presidio from 1822-1846 but a lack of money and political interest, combined with encroachment from a westerly-expanding United States allowed the (essentially deserted) Presidio to pass quietly into American

control in 1846 (Benton 1998:17-19). The military importance of the Presidio to the United States waxed and waned throughout its tenure as an Army base but ultimately declined for a host of reasons, including new aviation technology in WWI that demanded longer runways, which the Presidio could not expand to accommodate, being surrounded on all sides by the ocean or the city (Benton 1998:46). The Presidio remained an important administrative center in its remaining years as a base—and a post there held significant cachet within the military—but by the mid-1950s there were city-wide calls for base closure (Benton 1998:51, 54). In 1972, spurred by President Nixon’s “Parks to the People” initiative, Congress approved the creation of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) to preserve open park space around the city of San Francisco (Benton 1998:57, 61). This legislation included a stipulation that the Presidio would become park land once the Department of Defense determined it no longer needed the base (Benton 1998:61). The 1988 Base Realignment and Closure Act galvanized this transfer of the Presidio from the military to the National Park Service (NPS), which was completed by 1994. Two years later, facing unique management challenges, Congress passed legislation to create the Presidio Trust (the Trust), a federal agency devoted solely to the management of the Presidio as a park (Benton 1998:143). The Trust was tasked with making the Presidio a financially self-sufficient park by the year 2013, and it accomplished that goal (Nolte 2013). This unique situation meant that the Trust, in its 2002 General Management Plan, had to balance its vision for the cultural and natural resources of the park with a financial strategy for developing leasable properties and other revenue sources within the park (Presidio Trust 2002:2). This tension between

preservation and development underlies all land-use decisions the Trust makes, in service to the Trust's responsibility to the public to preserve the Presidio in perpetuity as a park.

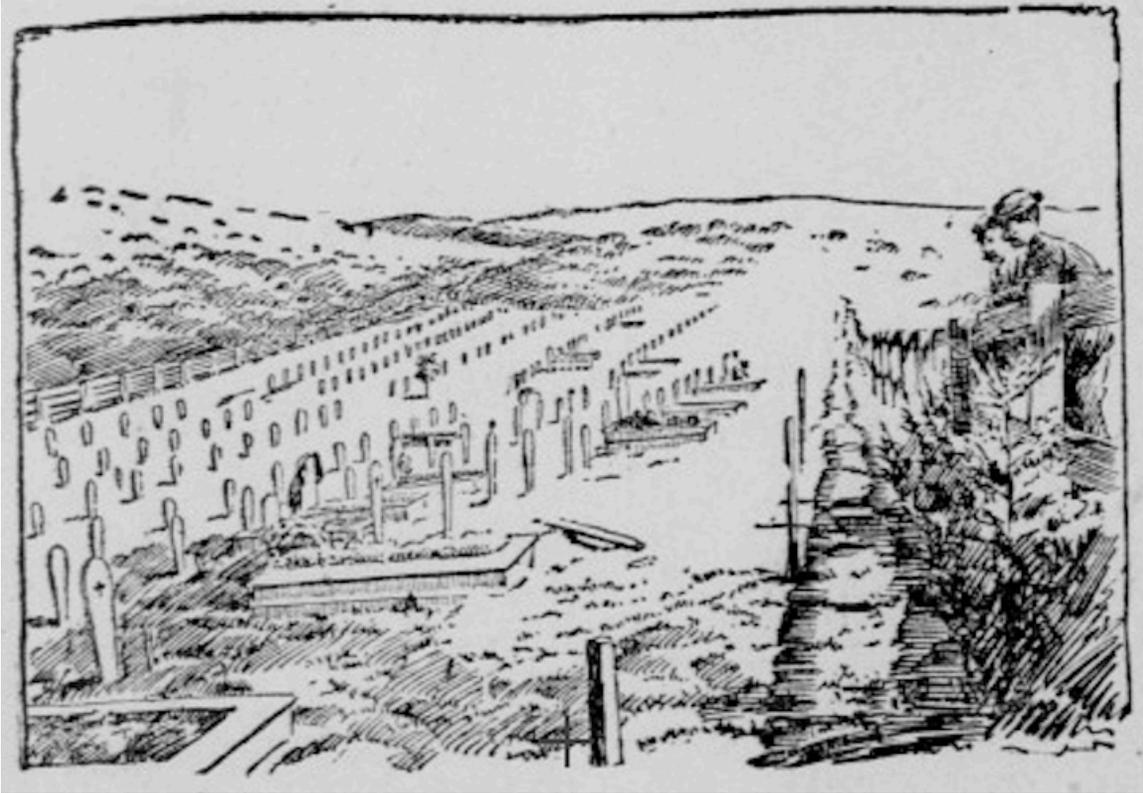
### **The Merchant Marine Hospital and Cemetery**

The Merchant Marine hospital and cemetery are located on Presidio lands but follow a different history from the Army base, as they were managed independently for most of their existence. Following a 1798 Congressional Act—which was part of a national effort to increase or attract global trade—the U.S. Treasury Department was authorized to allocate funds to construct and maintain Merchant Marine hospitals. These hospitals were to be managed by the Marine Hospital Service and installed in key maritime regions around the United States (Smart 1873:427). Merchant Marine hospitals provided care for all Merchant seamen regardless of nationality while in a U.S. port. As San Francisco grew as an international port the demand for this kind of care grew equally. Previous incarnations of Merchant Marine hospitals in the city had been destroyed by earthquakes and at one point the Marine Hospital Service was reduced to using a ship anchored off Fort Mason as an interim hospital. In response to the egregious lack of suitable facilities, the Treasury Department leased an eighty-six-acre parcel of land from the Presidio, in its southwestern quadrant just to the west of Mountain lake, and constructed an extensive hospital which opened in 1875 (Tutorow 1996:156; Maniery 1994:1).

In addition to providing medical care for seamen, the Merchant Marine hospital also conducted onsite burials for patients who died without the money or family to claim their bodies for burial elsewhere. The Merchant Marine Cemetery (the cemetery) located

directly behind the hospital and maintained quite cheaply, was essentially a pauper's cemetery, or "potter's field" (McCann 2006:8). The itinerant, likely impoverished nature of those buried there may account in part for the incomplete records of exactly who is interred in the cemetery. For the first ten years after it opened the hospital recorded patient deaths but did not specify where they were buried. The first official mention of burials at the cemetery comes in 1885, in a San Francisco annual municipal report which notes that seventeen men were buried in the MMC (Maniery 1994:8, 12). After 1885, burials at the cemetery are recorded for almost every year until 1912. The completeness of the burial record is limited by several factors. Between 1885 and 1912, there are five years' worth of missing annual reports (which may account for up to one hundred unrecorded burials). Further, the earthquake and fire of 1906 destroyed most of the city's death records, leaving little recourse to recover information from the years with no annual report. In addition, the death of foreign sailors was not always recorded (Maniery 1994:15; McCann 2006:6).

The best — perhaps only — description and illustration (shown in Figure 2) of the cemetery during the height of its period of use comes from an 1896 article in the *San Francisco Call* newspaper (San Francisco Call [SFC] 29 March 1896:19).



**Figure 2. Illustration of the Merchant Marine Cemetery  
(*San Francisco Call*, March 29, 1896).**

The article presents a romanticized but vivid picture of the cemetery landscape, as well as background on the seamen's funeral practices. In an abridged form:

*"Where Jack is at Rest"*

If you happen to wander over the United States military reservation, your steps may lead to a lonely spot out near the Golden Gate, where, in a valley dreary with stunted growths and hummocks of half-tamed sand dunes, long rows of white posts bearing names and dates intrude upon the landscape. As you draw near, there are mounds side by side, all sandy, save where nature has spread the tufts of weeds.

Every little hill marks the grave of a sailor — the resting-place of Jack, where there are no storms — for the acre of mounds is the [almost unheard of] sailors' cemetery in San Francisco.

When Jack comes into port and feels the hand of sickness pressing upon him, he forsakes his bunk for a bed provided by Uncle for him in the Marine Hospital. It matters not what his nationality may be, so long as he is a sailor he belongs to the Republic of the High Seas. Too often the journey to the hospital proves to be Jack's last voyage on earth, for every month the rollcall falls short in the local institution by four or five names.

And what visitor to the spot can say that Jack has not a tender heart?

“About the last thing the crews of ships have done in San Francisco before sailing,” said an officer of the hospital, pointing toward the few monuments, “was to come out here and decorate the graves of their dead comrades.”

“The crew of an English ship lost a comrade, who was buried here. They contributed enough out of their wages to buy a fence and head monument, and the day before their ship sailed for home they were out here at the grave. Then they had a photograph taken of the monument to show in England that they had done everything in their power for their shipmate.”

“Some of the other fences and flowers were placed there by friends of the sailors. They were all seamen, and as far as I knew had nothing in common more than a warm heart for one another.”

These dead sailors form a strange company as they lie side by side. As an illustration of the extraordinary diversity of nationality, it was stated that the sailors buried there since last August were natives of: Denmark, Ireland... Chile, Finland, New York, Greece... China, Hindostan...[etc.]

When the summons comes for Jack to go aloft he is dressed in his own clothes. Then they place him, this rough sailor, with his dress of the sea, which perhaps still savors of the salt air and the unctuous pitch, into a plain redwood coffin. There is not much ado over his interment. He is put under the sand with a board at his head, and, at least — he is with his mates.

The last recorded burial in the cemetery occurred early in 1912, though use had declined steadily since 1907 (Maniery 1994:14). The city of San Francisco had passed an ordinance in 1900 banning further burials within the city limits and requiring almost all city cemeteries to exhume and relocate their graves (Hansen 1975:199). The Merchant Marine hospital was also in transition, as the Marine Hospital Service took on an increasingly diverse variety of patients, such as the U.S. Coast Guard (Christian 1936:803). It was no longer an exclusively Merchant Marine service, and in 1912 (though nominally in 1902) the Marine Hospital Service became the United States Public Health Service (McCann 2006:10; Tutorow 1996:163). The Marine (now Public Health Service) hospital expanded its facilities in 1931 and again in 1952 and continued operating as a

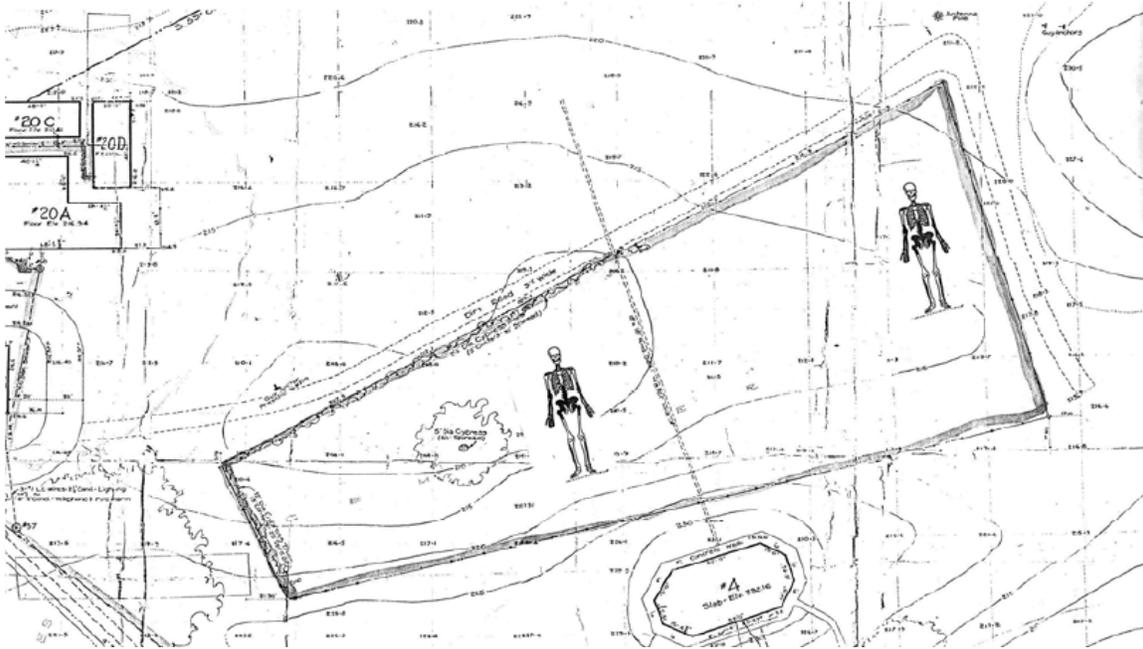
hospital until 1981, when it was closed and the land and property transferred back to the Department of Defense and eventually, to the Presidio Trust (Tutorow 1996:165-6).

The discontinuation of burials and the administrative shuffling within the Marine hospital during its latter years caused the already-shabby cemetery to fall into greater disrepair. An eyewitness recalls walking in the cemetery and noting the dilapidated wooden gravemarkers as late as the early 1930s, though by the 1950s photos of the area showed no gravemarkers (Maniery 1994:14). The cemetery appears in maps and surveys on and off until 1968 but was largely forgotten and unmentioned in hospital reports (McCann 2006:11; Tutorow 1996:168). At some point after the 1930s, the cemetery was capped with landfill from construction of the Presidio's Nike missile site and the new hospital wings, and in the 1970s a parking lot and tennis court were built atop the western part of the capped cemetery. Whether the Hospital and Army knowingly covered the cemetery or had forgotten it was there is a matter of debate. The Treasury Department allocated funds for the hospital to move the cemetery in 1950, which implies that administrators were aware of the cemetery at least to that date (McCann 2006:11). The relationship between the Army and the hospital management had never been an easy one and was exacerbated by the ambiguous and shifting jurisdictional boundaries between Army and hospital land (Tutorow 1996:158, 160-162). Certainly, the dilapidated state of the cemetery and the administrative upheaval, both within the hospital and between the hospital and the Army, as the two prepared for the base closure, contributed to the events that resulted in the cemetery being covered.

The cemetery was "rediscovered" in 1989 during base closure and has since been the subject of several archival and archaeological monitoring projects. The Trust

commissioned these projects in order to verify the existence of the cemetery and to delineate the vertical and horizontal boundaries of the landfill and cemetery, while minimizing disturbance of the cemetery. A 1990 test trench uncovered two sets of interred human remains at thirteen to fifteen feet below surface (the upper ten feet of which was construction debris) (Maniery 1994:1, 3). The trench produced coffin remnants, redwood fragments and shreds of a coarse fabric, as well as what were identified as the remains of two adult males (Vance Benté 1995:1-2). These in situ burials were taken as confirmation that the cemetery remained intact below the landfill. Further testing in 1995 and 2002 refined knowledge of the landfill and cemetery boundaries, as well as turning up further human remains including isolates and another in situ grave (McCann 2006:12). The two archival research projects (Maniery 1994 and McCann 2006) served first to frame, and then, to substantially add to the limited archaeological data recovered from the monitoring projects.

The archival and archaeological research from 1990-2006 produced the most complete picture, to date, of the cemetery's geographic and demographic characteristics. The dimensions of the cemetery were approximated through a combination of historical photographs and subsurface testing. They are estimated to be in the shape of an irregular, tapering quadrangle, the two long sides of which run northeast to southwest (Figure 3). The dimensions are roughly 400 ft (on the long sides), with the two shorter sides being 200 and 100 ft in length, respectively (Garner and Wesson 2002:4).



**Figure 3. Detail from 1949 survey of Merchant Marine Cemetery (GGNRA Archives).**

The natural soil — i.e., what covered the cemetery before it was buried by landfill — is a medium brown loose sand (Vance Benté 1995:2-4). As for the people buried below that sand, the Trust’s archival research produced a list of names of 836 individuals who were likely buried at the cemetery. They are nearly exclusively male seafarers, with the exception of two hospital staff, a gardener, and a stillborn infant (McCann 2006:15). Although nationality and ethnicity were not consistently (nor perhaps accurately) recorded, the list represents 43 countries and 30 U.S. states. Americans make up the largest number, followed by Sweden, Norway and Finland.<sup>2</sup> Marital status is only known for 200 of the total list; of these, 80% were unmarried. Cause of death is known for ca.

<sup>2</sup> This contrasts with the 1896 newspaper article’s (SFC 29 March 1896:19) assertion that “the proportion of Americans [buried in the cemetery] is remarkably small.”

73% of the list and was most often from respiratory diseases (e.g. tuberculosis), followed by heart and kidney diseases (McCann 2006:13-15). Statistical data on age at death are not available, though the full list of names includes a wide span of ages from early to late adulthood (McCann 2006:Appendix D).

In its 2002 Management Plan, the Trust emphasized the need to “protect and commemorate” the Marine hospital and cemetery (Presidio Trust 2002:122). A 2006 planning document for the entire Public Health Service Hospital area reiterated this conservative, protective stance towards the cemetery (Presidio Trust 2006:44).

Accordingly, in 2010-2011, the Trust capped the cemetery and landfill in sterile sand and planted the dunes with native vegetation. When asked why they did not first strip away the landfill, the Director for Presidio Trust archaeology Eric Blind noted (Fimrite 2010): “a lot of people were of the opinion that we should make this terrible thing right and remove the landfill, but it would have been a very difficult, ugly project.” The Trust had found human bone within the landfill layer and anticipated that removing the construction debris would be likely to further disturb the burials (Fimrite 2010). The southern border of the cemetery was already a popular spot for birdwatchers and the Trust developed the area further with a boardwalk, connecting the southern border to the trail system, and a sitting area with a plaque (Figures 4 and 5) to commemorate those buried at the cemetery (Fimrite 2011). The plaque reads: “Home is the Sailor, Home From the Sea. In memory of the merchant mariners from around the world who rest here.”



**Figure 4. Plaque and viewing platform (Presidio Trust).**



**Figure 5. The Marine Cemetery Vista in 2014: sitting area and plaque (author's photo).**

## Comparative Case Studies

Elsewhere in the Bay Area, archaeologists in recent decades have rediscovered similarly “lost” burial grounds. State archaeologist Mark Hylkema became involved with an impromptu burial ground that was rediscovered on Franklin Point beach (part of Año Nuevo State Park between San Francisco and Santa Cruz) as it began to erode into the ocean. The burial ground contained the remains of an estimated forty seamen from the mid to late nineteenth century — in particular, from the Sir John Franklin clipper, which sank just off the beach in 1865. The crew members of such shipwrecks were buried according to rank, with the officers and captain meriting a burial in San Francisco while the deckhands were interred directly on the beach (Stannard 2002). Hylkema used a cultural stewardship grant from the state to erect stabilizing and protective walkways around the burial site. Eight individuals had previously been removed from the site and were being stored “here and there in the state” (Stannard 2003). Researchers conducted limited analysis and testing on the remains before reburying them under the walkway. The University of Missouri performed laser ablation ICP-MS on the teeth of six individuals to determine lead levels. They found that all six were exposed to significant levels of lead during their adult life (Speakman et al. 2002:5). This may speak to the seamen’s diet, as canned foods from that time were sealed with (and tainted by) lead soldering (Stannard 2002, 2003) Hylkema’s self-described priority, however, was to rebury all remains and preserve the site from further erosion; in his words, “They served in the merchant marines [sic]. Are we going to put them in a box on a shelf? Or are we going to let them rest in peace? Ethically, the right thing to do was put them back in their resting place” (Stannard 2002).

The massive, late-nineteenth century burial ground rediscovered under the Legion of Honor museum in 1994 bears several similarities to the MMC. It, too, was populated largely by poor, socially peripheral (now anonymous) individuals and became hidden beneath new construction despite the 1900 mandate to remove burials from the city (Buzon et al. 2005:2). The cemetery was rediscovered during seismic retrofitting to the museum, and the museum urged swift reburial of the 751 individuals. The burial ground holds great archaeological significance, as researchers have had very few opportunities to study non-Native, historic-era skeletal collections in the American west (Buzon et al. 2005:6). However, researchers were only given a few days to study the entire collection before all remains were reburied. Researchers accordingly chose to focus on a limited sample of ninety adult remains (Buzon et al. 2005:1). Researchers used their analysis of sex, age, osteometric data and pathology to draw inferences about what life was like for the socially peripheral in Gold Rush-era San Francisco. Interestingly, a lower rate of nasal fractures, compared to American collections from similar socioeconomic groups living later in the nineteenth century, may be attributed to the fact that these people lived before the popularization of boxing (as some researchers have linked the popularization of professional boxing in the U.S. to changes in the cultural patterns of violence seen in its bioarchaeological record) (Buzon et al. 2005:12). More broadly, a high frequency of enamel hypoplasias (a dental response to stress) suggests widespread conditions of malnutrition and chronic infection. These kinds of conditions were certainly created by San Francisco's Gold Rush population boom, as sanitary infrastructure and access to adequate shelter and food could not keep pace with the massive influx of people (Buzon et al. 2005:9-11).

Another large “potter’s field” burial ground was discovered in 2012 during construction at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center in San Jose (Preuitt 2013). The cemetery was used between 1875 and 1935 to dispose of medical waste and to bury unclaimed human remains from the hospital. Like the MMC, the Santa Clara Valley Medical Center’s burial grounds were eventually omitted from maps and partially covered by a parking lot (Rehor et al. 2015:i). Also similar to the MMC, the available historical record of the hospital and cemetery is patchy—and in fact, the county of Santa Clara has no medical records from the cemetery at all (Rehor et al. 2015:3-2). Between 2012 and 2014, archaeologists excavated a minimum number of 1,017 individuals and sent the remains to California State University Chico for curation (Rehor et al. 2015:i; 6-1). Preliminary analysis showed that the deceased were primarily adult males, of diverse ancestries but with a preponderance of individuals of Asian ancestry, with most of the burials described as “utilitarian pauper burial[s]” (Rehor et al. 2015:6-6-11, 7-6). Further analysis of a portion of the remains is anticipated, and may include such sampling strategies as isotopic analysis and DNA studies (Rehor et al. 2015:6-1).

These case studies serve as reminders that it is more common than the general public thinks that entire historic era cemeteries are lost to memory through a cycle of disuse, disrepair, and urban sprawl (Nawrocki 1991). In particular, the cemeteries of poor and itinerant groups—such as nineteenth century seamen—tend to be particularly at risk of becoming “lost,” and eventually, disturbed. This presents both challenges and opportunities. Planners and cultural resource stewards are presented with a mandate to care for these sites, perhaps even more so because of past neglect and marginalization of those buried at such sites. They are also, however, presented with a unique opportunity to

give voice to the story of such people — a story which otherwise might not be told (Zuckerman et al. 2014:518). This thesis provides a model for how descendant communities of historic era cemeteries—in the case of the MMC, a figurative one—can be identified through ethnographic research. Having identified a descendant community and engaged them in a discussion of their interests in and priorities for the MMC, I argue that the Presidio Trust will now be better prepared to investigate and communicate these “untold stories,” as the Trust continues to manage the site.

### **Chapter 3: Review of the Relevant Literature**

At the beginning of the project, I identified two sets of research questions about the MMC. The first set has to do with the research potential of the MMC for archaeological and bioarchaeological study and for the anthropological study of labor history, while the second set focused on the site's (potential) significance to modern-day merchant mariners and to the public at large. The second set is largely answered by the findings from the ethnographic interviews. For the first set, which seeks to identify the kinds of research that would best serve the site and its stakeholders, it was necessary to look at the scholarly precedents for several of the research themes I identified. These research themes are: archaeological and bioarchaeological studies in historic American cemeteries; the archaeology of labor in America; and how researchers working in historic American cemeteries are partnering (or not) with the public.

#### **Archaeology and Bioarchaeology in Historic-Era American Cemeteries**

The anthropological study of human remains in America, today, is greatly informed by its disciplinary origins. Founding researchers like Samuel Morton, working in the nineteenth century, believed that different races were representative of successive evolutionary stages, with whites firmly ensconced at the apex (Armelagos and Van Gerven 2003:54-55). They believed that they could use cranial measurements to identify discrete racial typologies, and in turn, used these typologies (and supposed cranial markers of differential intelligence) to explain and justify racist sociopolitical hierarchies (Armelagos and Van Gerven 2003:55). Researchers like Earnest Hooton and Aleš Hrdlička, working in the early twentieth century, were concerned with broader questions

of health, disease, and the peopling of the new world. They, too, though, accepted race and racial hierarchies as givens and molded their findings to fit into this conceptual paradigm, rather than accepting that some of their evidence contradicted or failed to fit that model (Armelagos and Van Gerven 2003:56).

One byproduct of this worldview was that most of the skeletal samples collected in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were taken from prehistoric or non-white historic cemeteries (Lawrence and Shepherd 2006:80-85), whether because they were more vulnerable to disturbance, or because the researchers had fewer qualms over collecting them (Eklund 2002:24). Reflecting on Hrdlička's excavation of the Native American cemetery at Larsen Bay (which contained both prehistoric and early twentieth-century remains), McGuire (1994:182) notes that "It was wrong both because he did not consult the people he was studying, and because he would never have been allowed to dig up white victims of the 1918 flu epidemic." In a study of a wealthy white nineteenth-century Virginian family, Little et al. (1992:408) compare their sample to twenty-two other skeletal samples, ranging in date from 2535 B.C. to 1927 A.D. Of these twenty-three total samples, only nine are or include white burials. Of these nine, only one is described as "wealthy"—the rest are "soldiers" or "poor." Many of the larger skeletal collections amassed in the twentieth century, for instance the Terry collection, came from poorhouses and medical schools that got their specimens from unclaimed bodies at the morgue (Hunt and Albanese 2005:407). These demographic biases in comparative skeletal samples have two implications for researchers. One is that there will be temporal and ancestry-related gaps in the comparative collections—this is perhaps why Little et al. (1992:404) listed no contemporaneous, white, wealthy comparative populations

(Lanphear 1990:42; Buzon et al. 2005:1). The second implication has to do with the ethics of studying human remains.

Sometimes the ethics of which cemeteries are excavated is explicit—as in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when researchers considered prehistoric cemeteries primarily as sites for research, as opposed to considering them sacred ground not to be disturbed, as they did European cemeteries (Baugher and Veit 2014:21). Often, though, the ethical reasons for the sampling bias stem from systemic economic and ethnic inequality. It appears that cemeteries for the poor or marginalized populations are more at risk of disturbance, whether because the record of them is lost and they are later disturbed by development, or because those who might oppose their excavation lack the money or political voice to do so (Nawrocki 1991:4). This differential treatment of the dead suggests that some groups are valued or protected more than others. The legacy of scientific racism and the unequal treatment of the dead have spurred researchers to think critically about how and why they excavate and study human remains (Baugher and Veit 2014:33-34). This is one of several threads in the larger conversation among bioarchaeologists, over the state and future of the field, and relates broadly to a sense that the research ought to be relevant to, and for the benefit of contemporary society (Armelagos and Van Gerven 2003:61).

A more recent discussion of bioarchaeological research, by Knudson and Stojanowski (2008) seems to indicate that the field has made some progress towards this goal of making bioarchaeological research relevant and meaningful to contemporary, non-academic society. Knudson and Stojanowski pair methodological advances (in sex and age estimation, paleodemography, biodistance analysis, biogeochemistry and

taphonomy) with theoretical developments in how scholars think about social identity, making the argument that bioarchaeology is now particularly well suited to address such questions. They note some recent work that accomplishes this, but are primarily pointing the way forward for bioarchaeologists to use their unique skillset to address questions of social identity (Knudson and Stojanowski 2008:408-414). The disciplinary evolution described and called for by Knudson and Stojanowski can be traced through individual case studies of mortuary archaeology and bioarchaeology in historic-era cemeteries.

Dethlefsen and Deetz were some of the earliest researchers to consider historic-era cemeteries as archaeological sites. They surveyed colonial gravestones and used their analysis of gravemarker style changes, in the context of known historical events, to draw inferences on cultural shifts (Dethlefsen and Deetz 1966). Similarly, McGuire argued that analysis of a large-scale survey of historic gravestones may reflect a connection to the culture and ideology of capitalism (McGuire 1988:470-473). Gravestones remain a popular material focus for mortuary archaeologists (Baugher and Veit 2014, Mallios and Caterino 2011). Other recent mortuary archaeology in historic cemeteries has focused on culturally-specific mortuary customs (Brock 1991; Jamieson 1995; Smits 2008) and status and class (Little et al. 1992; Davidson and Mainfort 2008; Glover 2009). Only a small number of the mortuary archaeology projects I reviewed such as Little et al. 1992, Davidson and Mainfort 2008, and Veit et al. 2009 involved ground-disturbing research and included a bioarchaeological aspect.

Bioarchaeological research has proceeded in part as Armelagos and Van Gerven (2003:59-60) described, i.e. as descriptive osteology used to address paleodemographic questions, but there has also been a trend towards contextualizing findings with deeper

theoretical and historical considerations, as well as incorporating elements of mortuary archaeology. Lanphear 1990 is an example of the prior category of work, focusing solely on descriptive osteology, as she exclusively uses her analysis of enamel hypoplasias from a nineteenth century poorhouse to address questions of subadult demography in an industrializing society. However, much bioarchaeological research from the past three decades contains at least a nod to questions of larger relevance to modern society, or to broader theoretical questions. Archaeologists working on the nineteenth century First African Baptist Cemetery (FABC) in Philadelphia mention the significance and community support of their findings to the modern-day African-American community in Philadelphia (Parrington and Roberts 1984; Ericksen 1991) although an early report makes no mention of either (Angel 1987). The FABC is perhaps a special case, owing to the strong public interest that the project generated, but also provides a useful example of how researchers change the way they present information in response to public appetite or demand.

Excavations at the eighteenth century New York African Burial Ground in New York City were shaped by public opinion in an even more dramatic fashion (La Roche and Blakey 1997). Over 400 individuals from the site were initially excavated in the early 1990s by federal contractors to make way for a new government building, and the original firm hired to excavate proceeded with only minimal attention to the extraordinary cultural significance and research potential of the site. This, along with a failure to collaborate with or respond adequately to the local descendant community, led to widespread public outcry. Multiple local African-American entities including scholars, activist groups, and members of the public, interceded and replaced the research team

with one led by a physical anthropologist (Michael Blakey) and institution (Howard University) which proposed to change the focus to make the research relevant to the descendant community (La Roche and Blakey 1997:85-86).

Other bioarchaeological work in historic-era cemeteries employs stable isotope and morphological analysis to examine aspects of class, violence and disease (Cox et al. 2001; Buzon et al 2005; Brickley and Smith 2006; De La Cova 2010). France and colleagues use isotopic analysis in an ethnically, regionally, and socially diverse skeletal assemblage to assess the possibility of predicting ancestry, class, provenance and diet in other eighteenth and nineteenth century North American remains (France et al. 2014). Isotopic and morphological analysis are also used to discuss diet, occupation and childhood origin (Stevens and Leader 2006; Roberts et al. 2012.) Almost all of these authors include some element of mortuary archaeology or historical context. Buikstra and colleagues serve as an example of an explicitly interdisciplinary project, combining archaeology, bioarchaeology and history—though they acknowledge that the poor preservation condition of the skeletal material at their site severely curtailed their ability to draw meaningful theoretical inferences from skeletal analysis (Buikstra et al. 2000:16). Davidson (2008) situates a skeletal analysis of lethal gun violence and the desecration of the historic cemetery in question in terms of social identity. Finally, Harrod et al. (2012) use ethnographic interviews on nonlethal violence and trauma with a modern-day herding community to better inform their understanding of violence in the bioarchaeological record. They use their findings to form ethnographic analogies, which potentially allows them to “...move beyond understanding the mechanisms of injury and [attempt] to identify behavior, ideology, and motivations for violent encounters” (Harrod et al.

2012:65). While they intend to apply their findings to prehistoric skeletal populations, these ethnobioarchaeological analogies have clear applications to historic-era contexts.

Archaeological research in historic American cemeteries has increasingly favored a multi-disciplinary approach. To varying degrees, researchers now place importance on contextualizing the results of skeletal analysis within their specific archaeological and historical parameters, which allows a more sophisticated understanding of the site. My use of ethnography in identifying a potential descendant community answers the call for a multi-disciplinary approach to site research. The findings from the ethnographic interviews allow me to recommend bioarchaeological research questions that are informed by the ethno-historical perspectives of the figurative descendants for a disenfranchised group.

### **The Archaeology of Labor**

Recent work on the archaeology of labor in America draws heavily from “the new labor history,” in its focus on social justice (Shackel 2009). The National Park Service’s (NPS) report on labor as a research theme in National Historic Landmark designations suggests that this represents a departure from past labor histories, which focused on large institutions and unions while ignoring racial, ethnic, and gender politics and the experience of the individual (National Park Service 1992:3). The new labor history, as described in the report, “portrays wage earners and their families as cultural beings, not as human machinery” (National Park Service 1992:6). Much recent work in fact supersedes this distinction, and considers both daily individual experience *and* larger institutions/unions in the context of social justice. Archaeologists have long used the

material record to identify and investigate evidence of domination and resistance stemming from social inequality (McGuire and Paynter 1991). What are some of the ways researchers in America are using archaeology to talk about these aspects of inequality in the historic-era context?

McGuire (2014:263) notes that most explicit sites of historic-era labor struggle (strikes, lock-outs, union rallies, protest marches) do not leave much evidence in the material record. This may speak to what the NPS identified as a tendency of previous labor histories to focus on larger institutions, which are more likely to create easily identifiable sites and caches of material. Baugher's excavation (2010:494) of a nineteenth century sailors' rest home in New York builds to a compelling argument involving class, power, and the perpetuation of a hierarchical maritime lifestyle on land. Other researchers have gone beyond this model, by incorporating the theme of social justice, and by articulating the significance of these kinds of sites to contemporary people, especially the working class.

The Colorado Ludlow Massacre site has been the subject of an extensive archaeological research project, with much written about it in the latter vein. Early in the project, McGuire and Reckner (2002:51) argue that the archaeology of the burned tent platforms and pits, privies and surface scatter will allow researchers to draw inferences on class, gender, and ethnicity. They also suggest that these inferences ought to be considered in the context of labor struggles in the industrializing West and the emergence of globalized capitalism (McGuire and Reckner 2002:54). Perhaps most compellingly, the authors argue that the story of Ludlow, one of the most famous labor events in American history, can be used to dispel the myth of American exceptionalism as

embodied by the “mythic west”. The myth of the western “cowboy” or adventurer-laborer has been used to tell a story of an America that, unlike the rest of the world, is defined by individualism, democracy, and nationalism. McGuire and Reckner (2002: 45, 54) describe a much different legacy, of an exploitive capitalism which had much in common with global economic trends of the time. Saitta et al. (2005:201-202) used the material record from Ludlow to examine the tactical strategies of Labor and Capital (capitalization theirs), e.g. using food remains as a proxy for how strikers negotiated daily life amid company restrictions and attacks. They also link the site to modern-day labor movements by drawing parallels to current anti-labor sentiment and vandalism of labor monuments (Saitta et al. 2005:204-207). Chicone (2011) makes a similar case for Ludlow’s modern-day relevance when she links the archaeology of clothing at Ludlow to how current notions of the deserving v. undeserving poor of the working class shape public policy in America.

The Lattimer Massacre site in Pennsylvania has been interpreted to similar effect, in terms of arguing its relevance to contemporary social justice issues. Shackel and Roller (2012: 766-770) compare documentary evidence of xenophobia and blame of the strikers (the ancestors of today’s “locals,” who were then considered “immigrants”) for the nineteenth century violence to a modern-day culture war occurring in Lattimer, between today’s “local” and “immigrant” communities. They also attempt to clarify the sequence of events in the massacre (obscured by contradictory testimony and the loss or destruction of court records) by examination of cartridges, jackets and bullets from the Lattimer site (Shackel and Roller 2012:771-773). Saitta and colleagues (2005:208) write, “Organized labor has long been aware that its history is under constant threat of erasure.”

This speaks both to the highly politicized perspective in current archaeological studies of labor and to one way in which archaeology is being used to serve the present.

My approach to research at the MMC was informed by the conceptions of archaeologies of labor mentioned above. In particular, they convinced me that the experience of the individual (as seen through ethnohistory, archaeology, and bioarchaeology, among others) is an integral—and often missing—piece of larger narratives (e.g. the evolution of labor practices in the Merchant Marine). Further, they convinced me of the ethical imperative both of investigating these individual stories and of involving contemporary labor counterparts in each stage of research, since the results of such research can actually impact these communities. My research suggests one way for identifying one figurative descendant community for a site defined by labor and engaging with them to produce bioarchaeological research questions that are responsive to their modern-day interests and priorities.

### **How the Past Matters in the Present: Connecting the Public to the Archaeology and Bioarchaeology of Historic-Era Cemeteries**

The furtherance of public education and outreach in archaeology is one of the Society for American Archaeology's (SAA) eight principles of archaeological ethics. But what does this specifically mean, and how are archaeologists and bioarchaeologists incorporating this principle into their work on historic-era cemeteries?

The SAA describes public education and outreach as: enlisting public support for stewardship for archaeological resources; explaining and promoting archaeological methods; and as the communication of archaeological interpretations of the past (SAA

1996). Beyond the official definition from American archaeology's professional organization, archaeologists are citing a diverse and occasionally conflicting host of reasons for how and why they incorporate public outreach.

Potter, in a critique of the SAA's 1988 public relations primer, suggests that we need to add the "what" and "why," to the primer's "how" as we cannot assume that the public finds archaeology valuable. He then goes on to suggest, however, that the way to do this is to find out "what [the public] *needs* to know about the past" (Potter 1990:609; emphasis mine) which I interpret to mean that his emphasis is on a one-way flow of information, rather than a mutual creation of meaning. Harris (2011) takes the opposite approach, and writes that in collaborative work between researchers and the public, there is no need to try and forcibly reconcile conflicting viewpoints into a singular narrative. He cites one benefit of the process as the simple opportunity for the public's voice to be heard (Harris 2011:8). Hodder (2003) continues in this vein but asks us to think critically about how we are defining "local voices," and "stakeholders." He advocates for the use of ethnography into a site's surroundings in order to identify and then evaluate its impact on various stakeholders. McManamon (1991) reminds us that the majority of archaeology in the United States is paid for by the public, which again points to researchers' responsibility for making their work relevant to non-academic circles.

The following examples of recent public outreach illustrate how and why researchers working in historic-era cemeteries and with descendant communities are incorporating public outreach and considerations of the impact their research may have on modern-day communities into their work. Following vandalism of a prominent nineteenth century Pontiac, Michigan family's mausoleum, Setzer (2013) conceives of an

archaeo-ethnographic survey to assess local opinion on the value they place on their town's cultural resources. Young (2012:239) describes a field-school internship opportunity (in managerial positions) offered to Hopi students and notes that the students applied, not because they had a deep interest in archaeology, but because they hoped it would give them skills relevant to future employment. She does not say this in criticism, but to make the point that the benefit found through public outreach is often related to the modern day needs of a community.

Researchers at the FABC articulate this fact more clearly over time, as seen in the range of publications from 1984 to 2007. One of the early articles on the FABC project, published in the popular science magazine *Archaeology*, notes the scarcity of information on the life of postbellum black Americans in the urban Northeast, and describes the arrangements made for the public (including modern-day church members) to view or otherwise be involved in the excavation and research (Parrington and Roberts 1984:30 and 32), but the authors do not articulate why this research will be relevant to the public or to the contemporary black Philadelphia community, except to imply that the individuals in the cemetery are now being afforded attention they never had in life. Twelve years later, Crist and Roberts (1996:6), writing about the public outreach aspect of the FABC project in a CRM journal, link the new knowledge to an increase in “cultural pride and community involvement.” Finally, Jeppson's (2007:6) review of the culminating museum exhibit from the FABC excavations also cites the strengthening of a community's identity as the primary “good” arising from the public outreach efforts.

Setzer (2013), Young (2012), and the more recent authors writing on the FABC all grapple with the question of how their work might include and impact local

stakeholders. These sets of researchers inspired me, respectively: to wield ethnography as a creative tool in investigating the meaning a cemetery may have to a local community; to consider modern-day community priorities as equally deserving to academic ones; and to subscribe to a theory of research which incorporates continuously solicited collaboration and feedback from local stakeholders, at all stages of research.

For the purposes of this project, the single stakeholder group that I am focusing on is a figurative descendant community—modern day merchant mariners—for the historic-era MMC. I arrived at this classification via Silliman and Ferguson's (2010:49) qualification of how to define a descendant community, as: "contingent on the interpretation of social and historical contexts, as well as the self-identification of social groups," and from Singleton and Orser's (2003:144) assertion that a descendant community's status is "defined by relationship to a site...[and] that relationship can be symbolic." While this is the group I chose to focus on, this is certainly not the only group of stakeholders for the MMC.

Descendants or otherwise, in some cases who exactly the stakeholders *are* for a project or area is not so clear. Baugher's (2009:49) work on a historic church in New York is an example where a research team made the preemptory decision to expand the pool of potential stakeholders in a project where their identities were potentially unknowable. To wit: she describes the research team's entirely voluntary (i.e. not legally mandated) decision to include Native American monitors after they discovered small fragments of human bone that could potentially have come from either pre-contact Native Americans *or* white eighteenth-century Methodists. The researchers' decision in this project was explicitly based on their ethical notions of what archaeologists owed to the

modern-day Native American community (Baugher 2009:48) and speaks to Hodder's point about identifying impact to stakeholders.

In another historic-era bioarchaeological case study, Vanderpool (2013:98) uses stable isotope analysis to look at residential origin and early-life diet in a population of nineteenth century post-bellum black Americans, but does not give the reason for the excavation or explain her brief statement that the remains were reinterred, post-analysis, "in partnership with the local descent community." The lead CRM firm's project website, however, outlined an intensive community outreach effort, including a Georgia DoT-produced documentary, *I Remember, I Believe*, showing how the excavation and research led to a family reunion at the project site of two lineages historically affiliated with the cemetery. While the latter discovery was an impressive example of CRM practitioners engaging meaningfully with a descendant community, it was unfortunate that the details of that outreach were left out of the technical report, as this seems to reinforce the impression that scientific and academic research is something to be kept separate from public engagement.

McDavid (2002) is an example of the kind of research that explicitly prioritizes public outreach to stakeholders from the beginning of a project. She actively sought collaborations with descendants of both landholders and black slaves, in her creation of a project website for excavations on an eighteenth century plantation in Texas. She describes her goal of creating a conversational, rather than authoritative version of what they discovered via excavation, in the hopes that it would stimulate dialogue with the public, and cites her reasoning as, "truth is created, not discovered" (McDavid 2002:305). Blakey (2001:401) would agree on the malleable nature of truth, but cautions that "[the]

ability to define another people has been a major means and measure of social control.” Shackel (2001:665) links this idea to public forms of history—monuments, memorials, museums etc.—and argues that often these “official” histories are largely shaped by modern day politics and social relations, and consequently, that competing narratives are excluded. McDavid (2002), Blakey (2001), and Shackel (2001)’s argue that partnering with stakeholders is not just a way to improve archaeology’s popular image but an ethical imperative, so as not to co-opt a living community’s history and identity.

Returning to the site of the Ludlow Massacre, Walker (2003) and McGuire (2004) both describe their interactions with contemporary mineworkers, and how the project archaeologists brought exhibits to the annual commemorative event. McGuire and Reckner (2002:55) include a note at the end of their article, that “Permission to excavate at the site of the Ludlow Massacre was granted by the United Mine Workers of America—signaling the importance they place on contemporary mineworkers holding authority over the site. McGuire (2004:70) spoke to a hall full of union steelworkers about the archaeology and history of the Ludlow site, and he recalls how the steelworkers asked about the strikers’ hardships, and commented on how they reminded them of “sacrifices their own families were making.”

## **Conclusion**

Bioarchaeologists working in historic-era cemeteries are increasingly recognizing the value in including aspects of public outreach in their work. The “public” in their line of work often means the descendant community, at least as one among others. In the case of those buried at the MMC, for whom there are likely no lineal descendants (or no

known ones), I am considering the modern day community of merchant mariners as figurative descendants. This is perhaps taking liberties with Silliman and Ferguson's (2010:49) definition of a descendant community as being: "contingent on the self-identification of social groups," and with Singleton and Orser's (2003:144) idea that a descendant community's status is "defined by relationship to a site...[and] that relationship can be symbolic." We've seen, however, how archaeologies of sites defined by labor can have direct correlations to the welfare of their modern day counterparts. In some cases, the racist or xenophobic hierarchies invoked to legitimize systems of inequality in labor echo those used in the early days of physical anthropology. We see this clearly in a 1911 U.S. immigration commission's answer for why immigrants were particularly suited to dangerous anthracite mining: "the immigrants'...limited imagination shields them from the fears which would harass a more sensitive class of persons," and a 1900 New York Herald article on Russian immigrants: "[these] men...are no farther along in human progress than were their ancestors, the hordes of Attila, when he led them howling up to the gates of Rome" (Shackel and Roller 2012:767 and 768). The NPS theme study on labor (1992:6) notes a subtheme of "Living and Dying," as "for most laborers, the experience of working could not be separated from the fear of death or injury," hence why many professional classes (including the Merchant Marine) founded hospitals and cemeteries specifically for their tradesmen. However, McCarthy (1999:127) notes that the National Park Service's maritime history program tends to focus on lighthouses, ships, and life-saving stations. It strikes me that the Merchant Marine Hospital's associated cemetery and those buried there are particularly suited as subjects of inquiry into the NPS theme of living and dying.

In the chapter that follows, I use the ethnographic interviews, first, to assess whether modern day merchant mariners can, and ought, be considered a descendant community for those buried at the MMC. I also use the ethnographic interviews as an opportunity to survey merchant mariners on the amount and nature of their interest in learning more about the MMC via bioarchaeological analysis of those buried there. Following Buikstra's example of a contextualized approach which incorporates multiple lines of evidence, McGuire's focus on the unifying research theme of labor, and heeding Blakey's caution that cultural definition is often used as social control, I suggest how bioarchaeologists at the MMC could develop research questions which are academically rigorous but targeted to the needs and interests of the living merchant mariner community.

## Chapter 4. Methods

This research project had three core objectives. The first was to assess the Merchant Marine Cemetery (MMC)'s research potential as a site of bioarchaeological research. The second objective was to test the hypothesis that modern day merchant mariners could and ought to be considered a figurative descendant community of those buried at the MMC. Finally, if this group *could* be considered a descendant community, what was the nature of their interest in the cemetery, and in bioarchaeological research at the site?

The first objective was achieved during preliminary background research for the project. I gathered and analyzed primary and secondary documents directly relevant to the MMC and wider theoretical anthropological literature. Based on this research, I found that the site was particularly suited to using bioarchaeological research in order to add to the history of the Merchant Marine identity. The greater part of the research project—the part concerned with the latter two objectives—was achieved by conducting ethnographic interviews with merchant mariners from the San Francisco Bay Area. The process of designing, conducting and analyzing the interviews is the topic of this chapter.

### **The Data and the Research Design**

I conducted eight ethnographic interviews between March-April of 2014. Before the start of interviews I created several interview tools and passed the Sonoma State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) process required of any research involving human subjects. I designed an interview guide (Appendix A), a “what is bioarchaeology”

handout (Appendix B), and an informed consent statement (Appendix C). These were developed and refined over several iterations with the guidance of my thesis advisor so that, first, the language used would be clear and informative to non-anthropologists/archaeologists and, second, so that the interviews might be focused enough to facilitate the best possible chance of addressing the research questions.

The ethnographic interviews consisted of eight in-person conversations, one per interviewee, ranging in length from roughly thirty minutes to an hour and a half. Interviews were recorded, with the full knowledge and consent of participants, by digital audiorecorder, and later transcribed in full into typed electronic documents. The interviews were supplemented by longhand notes taken during the meeting to indicate the situational contexts and events that occurred during the interview, when these seemed relevant. The interviews were based on an interview guide (list of questions) but were conducted in a conversational style, following the idea that an ethnographic interview works best as a friendly conversation, rather than a formal interrogation (Spradley 1979:58). The interviewees included a longshoreman, pastors from a maritime church, professional seamen both retired and active (many of whom had past military service), a recent graduate of the California Maritime Academy (Cal Maritime) and the Commanding Officer of Cal Maritime's training ship. The eight interviews represented a feasible number for the scope of this project and for the period of time given to data collection (one semester). It is not intended as a statistically representative sample of this entire descendant community. In the same vein, as all interviewees were male and almost all were over fifty years of age, the demographic characteristics are not intended to be representative.

Once the thesis has been completed, a hard and digital copy will be sent to each of the interviewees. It is beyond the scope of this project to conduct secondary and follow-up interviews. However, this would be an excellent direction for future research, as it would give the interviewees and the researcher the opportunity to engage in a deeper dialogue, informed by the analysis of the first interviews.

### **Conducting the Interviews**

The primary requirement for selecting participants to interview was that they be (now or previously) involved directly in the maritime industry of the San Francisco Bay Area. Ideally, they would be (or would have been) sea-going merchant mariners, as that most closely correlates to the population at the MMC. My first point of entry, however, came through a friend employed by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), which represents the shore side of the maritime industry. The ILWU has a rich and complicated history of its own, and, while it has cooperated with seamen's unions (Schwartz 2009:70) it has not always had an easy or close relationship with them. Accordingly, while the single interview I conducted with an ILWU member was highly valuable, I did not pursue further contacts there, in order to focus on the sea-going community. Other personal connections led me to three other sources (five interviewees). A friend employed in San Francisco shipping services had very close connections to the Merchant Marine and to the Norwegian community, particularly the Norwegian Seamen's church. This led me to interview two pastors of the church—one current and one retired. While they were not themselves seamen, they had extensive familiarity with the maritime industry and community of San Francisco and also provided insight into

funeral services for seamen in the last half-century. This same friend also put me in touch, through an extended network, with a retired Navy/merchant mariner involved with the American Merchant Marine Veterans (AMMV) group. A recreational sailing friend introduced me to a marine surveyor (previously Navy and commercial captain). Finally, my thesis advisor put me in touch with a recent graduate of the California Maritime Academy. I found the remaining two participants through the internet, by searching for leadership of various professional organizations. In each of these cases, I emailed a brief description of my research and reasons why I hoped to interview them. While two individuals ultimately responded and agreed to be interviewed, there were many others who did not respond, or whose contact information was outdated. If I had had to rely exclusively on this mode of introduction, the interview process would have been greatly prolonged. These two individuals and those I met through personal contacts were very helpful in terms of suggesting and sometimes directly facilitating further contacts. Finally, it was notable that while I arrived at the introductions to these eight individuals in various ways, there was a great deal of overlap in terms of who was suggested to me as a next person to contact, and in terms of who knew who.

The first step in the interview was to review and sign the informed consent statement with the interviewee. This document reminded the interviewee of the nature and purpose of the research and of their rights to review or withdraw their participation, and recorded their choices as to anonymity and for what they would allow me to use the interviews. I kept the signed copies and provided an extra copy for the interviewee to take home for reference. Once the audio-recorder was turned on and the conversation began, the interview guide was designed to move the conversation from a broad sense of the

interviewee's professional background to his specific thoughts on the MMC. I also kept a reserve of secondary questions to ask if time remained. Before introducing the questions about the MMC, I asked the interviewee to read the "what is bioarchaeology" handout and responded to any of their questions. The handout was designed to give a simplified explanation of why archaeologists study human remains and burial contexts as well as a brief list of the kinds of information that bioarchaeology can (and cannot) produce. Then, if time allowed, towards the end of the interview, I showed the interviewee photographs of belongings from the deceased at the MMC (now held at the National Archives and Record Administration in San Bruno, California) and asked them whether they recognized them or had anything similar. While some of the items were personal letters and photos, they also included nineteenth-century professional documents and accreditations (versions of which exist today) which provided another way for the interviewees to connect the past with their own experience.

### **Analyzing the Interviews**

I completely transcribed each interview into an electronic document and included time stamps periodically for reference. After a first read-through, I re-read the transcriptions and underlined statements that seemed particularly salient to or directly addressed one of the primary research objectives. These underlined passages were not the only sections included in further analysis, but they provided points of focus in the lengthy document created by transcribing each interview.

The first level of analysis consisted of creating a simple matrix (see Appendix D) of the basic profiles for each interviewee and a "Yes/No/Unclear" answer as to whether

they were interested in bioarchaeological research at the MMC. Along with name and current employment, the profile characteristics included interviewees' professional affiliations and previous work experience, as well as whether they were native to the San Francisco area. This provided me with an initial demographic snapshot of the interview group and allowed me to roughly quantify interest in bioarchaeological research at the MMC.

The next phase of analysis involved “coding” the data, which is the over-arching term for the sorting and labeling of patterns or categories that emerge from repeated close readings of the transcriptions (O'Reilly 2009:34). During this phase, patterns arising within and across interviews are linked back to the research questions. This is an iterative, admittedly subjective process, as initial generalizations are related to broader frameworks (O'Reilly 2009:37). Writing the findings followed Spradley's (1979:212-215) guidance of selecting a brief thesis statement arising out of the data (in my case, modern day merchant mariners ought to be considered a figurative descendant community of those buried at the Marine hospital cemeteries) and then continuing by list of topics raised during coding. These topics are a way to group findings between interviews that often proceeded quite differently from one to the next. The topics for each group of findings are substantiated by direct quotes and evidence from the interview transcriptions. I present the findings in Chapter 5 and discuss their implications for future management of the MMC in Chapter 6.

## Chapter 5. Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents and analyzes the data used to answer two of the core research questions. These data come from the transcriptions of eight interviews conducted with San Francisco-area maritime industry professionals in the spring of 2014. The data are organized so as to facilitate a discussion of what conclusions may be drawn from the interviews, and, in the subsequent chapter, what recommendations can be made for any potential research at the MMC. They are categorized, first, by the overarching research question to which they pertain. To reiterate: the first question asks whether modern day merchant mariners can and ought to be considered a descendant community for the nineteenth century seamen buried at the MMC. The second question explores modern day merchant mariners' interest in the cemetery and in bioarchaeological research at the cemetery. Once the data is sorted between these two headings, they are subcategorized further by themes arising within these two sections. These themes may correspond to a particular interview question asked of each interviewee, or they may represent a common thread that arose independently among multiple interviews.

As these data only have meaning—for the purposes of this thesis—in the context of the culture of merchant mariners past and present, a brief description of these two populations will precede the list of findings. For the “past” population, meaning those buried in the MMC, this description will take the form of a brief review of what is known of their demographic composition and what life was like for merchant mariners in the late nineteenth century. The “present” population refers to the eight individuals interviewed, each of whom will be separately introduced.

## **The Two Populations in Question**

The first population in question includes those buried at the MMC. What we know of them represents a best estimate, as the records consulted were incomplete and often ambiguous. As such, the records provide an unverified, but likely fairly accurate, picture of those buried at the cemetery.

With that caveat, what do we know about them? The deceased were nearly all men who died between 1881 and 1912. They hailed predominantly from the United States and then from the Scandinavian countries, though 43 countries in total are represented. There are no statistical data on age at death, but the list of names for seamen likely buried at the MMC contains individuals as young as 20 (“George Cross, California, Tuberculosis”) and as old as 68 (“Constantine Nicholas, Greece, Tuberculosis”) (McCann 2006:Appendix D). Most of these men were likely single: of those for whom marital status is known, 80% were unmarried. It is unlikely that the single men had acknowledged descendants, though they may have had children out of wedlock. Respiratory illnesses like tuberculosis account for the greatest number of deaths, followed by heart and kidney diseases. Only a small handful of records lists causes of death popularly linked to the life of a sailor, e.g., scurvy, alcoholism, sexually transmitted diseases, violence and “being struck by a sling load of cement” (McCann 2006:Appendix D-13).

From historical records and modern histories of the Merchant Marine, we know that the life of a late-nineteenth century seaman was characterized by difficult working conditions, little to no legal protection or rights, and social stigma. At the same time,

first-hand accounts of life at sea—such as Dana’s 1840 travel diary “Two Years Before the Mast”—suggest that the seamen were aware of their stigmatized social status but also experienced a sense of camaraderie and pride in the unique culture that maritime labor created.

The second population in question is the eight individuals interviewed. The number and length of interviews, while not intended to be statistically representative, are commensurate to the scope of this thesis. They will allow conclusions to be made as to the latter two research questions and will provide a starting point for expanded consultation, in the event that the Presidio Trust pursues research at the cemetery. I will introduce each of the men I met, briefly, in order of when I met them.

Captain Patrick Moloney met me in the captain’s quarters aboard the historical living museum, docked WWII Liberty ship, the Jeremiah O’Brien. We spoke for an hour and a half, interrupted only by Captain Moloney’s warm greeting to the occasional tourist poking their head in over the rope. As shipmaster and port captain of this living museum for 19 years and executive director of the company that runs it, Captain Moloney is a seasoned advocate for maritime history. His extensive work history includes both military (in Vietnam) and civilian maritime service, with the Jeremiah O’Brien being his 13<sup>th</sup> command. A picture of him in uniform, smiling, hangs over a plaque that reads: “This is my ship and I’ll do as I damn please.”

I met Mike Villegiante over breakfast at the International Longshore and Warehouse Union’s (ILWU) annual caucus in San Francisco. We sat with other members of the ILWU, particularly from Local 10, where he served as president for a term. As his colleagues teased one another not to “[cuss] like you do on the docks” in front of my

recorder, Mr. Villegiante told me how he and his brothers followed his father into working as a San Francisco longshoreman, and how his own children, despite pursuing other careers, would love to join the industry if their names came up in the hiring lottery. He remains active with ILWU Local 10 and the Bay Area Longshoremen's Memorial Association (BALMA). Of all the interviewees, Mr. Villegiante spoke the most frankly about how he sees a direct connection between the history of labor rights in the maritime industry and the quality of life for maritime professionals today.

Captain Alan Huguenot served as a navigator for the Navy, as captain for super-yachts, as a naval architect/marine engineer, and for the past 30+ years as a marine surveyor and expert witness. During our meeting at the Presidio Starbucks cafe, he described his current role with wry humor: "I'm the guy that wears all the hats there are... and I've got more hats than anybody else—so the lawyers like me." In addition to his extensive professional expertise, his thoughts on the MMC were strongly informed by his philosophy of life and death—a philosophy he formed after a near-death experience.

Pastor Tormod Woxen was one of two pastors from the Norwegian Seamen's Church with whom I spoke. He was serving as interim priest when we met in his apartment above the church on Hyde Street. His perspective on the maritime profession is simultaneously the view of an outsider, as a non-seaman, and the view of someone intimately acquainted with the profession's people and their history. The son of a seaman's pastor, he grew up "in the lap" of Norwegian seamen, and, describes himself as a "*homo viator*," a traveling man. Having lived both in Norway and in America, and trained as a psychotherapist and army chaplain, he offers a unique perspective on the different ways each country treats their dead.

Captain Harry Bolton is the commanding officer for the California Maritime Academy's training ship and director of Marine Programs and Leadership Development at the school. As a graduate of the Academy (class of 1978), this post brings him full circle, after over 30 years of commanding Merchant Marine ships supporting commercial and military efforts. As fog-horns sounded behind us in the bay, where his 500 ft training ship floats, he described how SCUD missiles would fly over his ship in Iraq each night. Similarly to Captain Moloney, he laments the increasingly bureaucratic nature of the industry's regulation.

Captain Kerry C. O'Brien's diverse and lengthy career includes time in the Navy (serving in Vietnam), as a sail-maker and rigger, in the Merchant Marine, and as a carpenter and teacher in San Francisco. He told me ribald sea-stories and described his current staunch commitments to maritime and veteran's organizations. He is involved with Vietnam veterans, Merchant Marine veterans, Fisher House, and Blue Star Mothers among others. At the end of our lunch at the Stonestown Galleria Olive Garden restaurant (near Lake Merced) he gifted me a pocket-sized booklet containing the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution—one of 2700 he bought to give away, "...because I want people to really understand."

Second Mate William Filbeck was both the youngest person interviewed and the only one still spending the majority of his work time at sea. He met me in Fairfield, California, as he commuted between visiting family in the Bay Area and his home in Reno, Nevada. Like Captain O'Brien, his love of the sea started with the Sea Scouts (the maritime branch of the Boy Scouts of America). From there, he joined the Coast Guard for postings in San Francisco Bay and Kodiak Island in Alaska, before enrolling at Cal

Maritime (where he trained under Captain Bolton). Now a Second Mate for Foss Maritime, his work brings him to Arctic waters on 127' ocean-going tugboats. His work schedule—two months on, two months off—allows him to establish a home when ashore but also sets him apart from his friends who work conventional hours.

Pastor Dagfinn Kvale met me at his home in San Anselmo (north of San Francisco), where he retired after serving for 17 years as the Pastor for the Norwegian Seamen's Church in San Francisco during the '60s and again in the '90s. Like Reverend Woxen, he maintains strong ties to his homeland, Norway, where he spends three months each year. Having first worked as a university librarian for several theological departments, in 1966 he “left books to work with people”—though this hasn't stopped him from authoring multiple books, including a history of the Norwegian Seamen's Church in San Francisco.

### **Identifying Modern-Day Seamen as a Figurative Descendant Community**

A primary research objective of this project was to test the hypothesis that the merchant mariners living today could be considered a figurative descendant community for those buried at the MMC. The idea arose, in part, because of the nature of the cemetery. First, the cemetery inhabitants—highly itinerant seamen, hailing from all over the world—were, for the most part, unlikely to have had acknowledged, direct biological descendants. They are also a burial group defined by their belonging to a community of maritime labor. In the absence of lineal descendants, who ought to fill this role for the men buried at the MMC? The results of the interviews allow me to argue that the

modern-day community of merchant mariners living and working in the Bay Area best fits the definition of a descendant community for this cemetery.

#### Cultural Continuity, Evolution, and Change

Singleton and Orser (2003:143) write, “Descendant communities are, broadly speaking, present-day groups of people whose heritage is under investigation at an archaeological site or who have some other historic, cultural, or symbolic link to the site.” In conceiving of a figurative descendant group, it is useful to consider the meaning of words like “heritage” and “ancestor.” In the first place, these words imply a lineal biological and often legal connection, whereby something tangible or abstract is passed between generations. In a second, figurative sense, these words describe a link between one entity and another entity that “went before;” i.e., an antecessor. Using this meaning, and taking Singleton and Orser’s point that a descendant community is in one way defined by “whose heritage is under investigation,” the question to ask is, is the culture of those buried at the MMC the logical ancestor of the modern day culture for seamen?

My own research into the history of the industry and the interviewees’ statements revealed several significant changes to the industry and to the daily experiences of merchant mariners since the nineteenth century. These major changes were almost entirely precipitated by the industry’s reaction to new laws and regulations. I argue that these changes, while striking, in fact reveal a pattern of continuity and evolution, rather than a rupture between cultures.

One concept that frequently arose was “flags of convenience.” This term refers to shipping companies who register their ships to countries with particularly favorable or lax costs and regulations, rather than to the owner’s country of origin. As described by the

interviewees, “Flags of convenience are ways for international shipping companies, or even some domestic, to get away from the intense regulation” and “Lots of Liberty ships wound up under Panamanian flag or a Liberian flag, just to get away from U.S. shipping regulations. It’s tax dodges. Between the regulations, and the union requirements, [Americans] regulated themselves off the seas, and the trade was being carried by third-worlders.” These interviewees express frustration with what is widely understood as a decline in American-flagged fleet dominance in the international shipping industry. “Why would they keep an American crew—expensive, with all these requirements—when they can [get] my friend from Manila [for] a hell of a lot cheaper? And it’s not just the cost, it’s the fact that [Americans] are lawsuit happy—‘oh, my back, my back!’ Some bad actors have given the whole industry a bad name.” This was echoed at the ILWU: “every day I deal with merchant seamen, [but] we don’t have too many American seamen anymore, which is a travesty.”

The changing legal regulations imposed on American-based ships have had a clear impact both on the size of the U.S.-flagged fleet and on the ethnic make-up of who mans these ships. These changes have forced American mariners and maritime businesses to adapt. As one interviewee explained, non-third-world mariners have moved from the ship to shore: “you must distinguish between those who are physically seamen on the ship and those who cater to the maritime industry. There’re fewer [who are seamen] but there are so many attached to the maritime industry — technically-wise, supply-wise and in other relations to the shipping industry.” In the same vein, another interviewee listed the broad range of employment possibilities for graduates of Cal Maritime:

One third [of the Cal Maritime campus] are deck officers in marine transportation, so they're going to be in the Merchant Marine. The other third are engineers, so the majority of them will be engineers at sea. The other third study IBL [international business and logistics] and GSMA [global studies and maritime affairs] [and are hired by] the Coast Guard, CIA, FBI, Sheriff's departments...[by] maritime companies that need people to keep track of the policy and the changes in the maritime business. You could go down to work for the Port; [as] shipping agents; as terminal supervisors. IBL, I mean you could go work for Target if you wanted.

This broad list shows that, while the post-graduate hiring scheme may not all lead to life at sea, the definition of what it means to work in the maritime industry has evolved and expanded — rather than gone extinct. A recent graduate of Cal Maritime provided the most contemporary description of the employment climate for mariners his age who have recently entered the sea-going work force:

There still is a vibrant industry...it's not like it was where we used to have tramp ships, container ships, tanker ships and all these different facets of our industry. [But] we still have a very strong tug industry [and] one of the growing aspects is OSVs [offshore support vessels]—boats in the Gulf running supplies between drill rigs and drill ships, and those are still American-flagged vessels. They have these because the Jones Act

protects them: if you transport goods into the US....you can't go from a U.S. port to a U.S. port unless you're a [U.S. -flagged ship]....When we first got to [Cal Maritime] it was right when the economic recession hit — [so] you're feeling the American fleet drying up, in one sense, 'cause you're not seeing them build container ships or U.S.-flagged tanker ships, but they're building OSVs in the Gulf like crazy, and that's some of the highest paying work in our industry. I'm actually looking into making it into the Gulf, the pay is *ridiculous* out there.

While he describes a loss of U.S. dominance in certain kinds of traditional shipping avenues—container and tanker ships, especially—he is also describing how the industry has adapted and evolved.

Another theme that seems to challenge the idea of continuity is how daily life and labor conditions have changed between the populations of mariners past and present. Labor regulations, especially the Jones Act of 1920, have fundamentally altered the rights of mariners — often for the better, though the more stringent regulations have driven business overseas. The interviewees describe life before the labor rights laws were passed as a fundamentally inhumane work environment. One described how “before the Jones Act [of 1920] basically each ship was its own shell company so they could send guys out for two years at a time and then at the end of the trip when it's time to get paid, they just bankrupt the company and screw people over.” Another remarked that “*Two Years Before the Mast* changed everything [for the United States Merchant Marine.] It brought, for the first time, public awareness to the horrifying conditions of seamen. The

floggings...Shanghaiing, leaving them on docks, not even paying them...". In these descriptions the mariners are virtual slaves, with no recourse to justice if they are physically abused or cheated of wages. Mariners' rights in times of war have changed, as well, as one interviewee explained; "They don't do the old convoys [in wartime] like they used to do. Now, they charter [Merchant Marine vessels] and guys like me are fully aware we're going to a war zone, and could get killed." Now, mariners are able to make the decision for themselves whether to join a crew for ships involved in potentially dangerous military support.

The increased regulations gave mariners much-needed protections, but also created a shift towards a more professional environment, with higher standards for behavior and education. One interviewee noted education as a cause for the following changes: "The sailors today are way different... the officers are way more educated, today, [and] I think there are fewer felons and fewer criminals...fewer dopers." Another interviewee pointed to regulations as a driver for these changes, i.e., "Alcohol was a big problem among many sailors. Today it's not at all because regulations are so strict. On the oil platforms...if you're found with any alcohol you get fired, immediately." A third interviewee continued in that theme, "It's a zero-tolerance business [now], we're more heavily regulated than the airlines." In addition to the increased expectations for behavior aboard ship, a combination of profit-maximizing business strategies (including shorter stints at sea) and state-of-the-art technology means that crew size and time at sea versus time in port have changed from the late nineteenth century. One interviewee described the changed life aboard ships, "[On ships] before, there was quite a crowd. Today, on the

biggest ships you hardly see anybody.” A pastor from the Norwegian Seamen’s church described the changes from shore-side, as he saw it:

[Now] everything is geared towards making more profits. Before, the ships could be in port a week, two weeks, and then you would have time to do sight-seeing trips, and soccer matches, and horseback-riding. But now, because of improvement of logistics, they can offload and reload the ships in a very short time, and they will be in port for maybe only a few hours. So no time, or less time, to go ashore. In the ‘70s there was still time, so [it] was basically in the ‘80s when there started to be a great change, on these aspects...

The second pastor from this church described a similar shift and hinted at the implications it had for the shore-side activities provided by the church community: “The sailors’ working conditions [have] changed drastically: before, they could have been a year on a ship before they were able to have leave and go home. Now...it’s even down to three months and less. So, less need to go ashore [when in port]. If you’re on a boat [for] a year, you’re more in need of coming ashore, doing something, not being tied down to the ship.”

In addition to changes in living conditions aboard ships, the mariners themselves have changed. When I asked interviewees to describe the average merchant mariner of the past, they universally described a tough, generally uneducated, highly itinerant individual who had little control over their conditions in life. I variously heard that, “they

were] uneducated, it was a way to get off the farm and get out of the country,” and, from another interviewee, that “most of these guys...probably didn’t have much of a home. You were gone for years at a time unless you were on a coasting trade. They were largely social outcasts. We didn’t get a bad reputation just *because*: we *earned* it.” Another compared past and present mariners by contrasting how “[seamen in the past] were hardcore, they solved problems with the fists instead of the overtime pencil.” One interviewee quoted his professor, “Dr. Tim Lynch [at Cal Maritime] used to say in his history class, he said the sailors were the four Ps: pugnacious, profane, promiscuous and profligate.” One interviewee poignantly captured the moment of transition from just a generation before him, when it was still widely common for merchant mariners not to maintain a permanent home.

It was a different era entirely. I was at the doctor’s one time and I noticed a big box, and they were throwing files in it, you know, ‘cause these guys are dead. I’d look at their home address: 450 Harrison, 450 Harrison, [the address of the Sailors Union of the Pacific in San Francisco.] So these guys had no home. Now even in my generation, a lot of these guys would ship out, they’d come in, there were a couple of hotels where there was a bar downstairs, they would get a room, they’d be in the bar, and they were set. When they run out of money, they’d go ship out again, and to be married was out of the question, they might have had a girlfriend in Yokohama but they were really gypsies, it was kind of a sad way to go.

Other interviewees described their perceptions of the difficult lives and learned toughness of mariners from the past. One pointed specifically to the lack of control previous generations of mariners could claim over their circumstances of employment; “[Their luck was] just random. You don’t know what kind of ship you’re going to get on, you go to the [union hiring] hall, or to a company — you’re throwing caution to the wind, you don’t know the reputation of the ship, you don’t know what the situation is or was.”

Another interviewee imagined that they were “tough men. You can imagine being on a ship for 16 hours, throwing 150 pound sacks all day and night. If you go to our [ILWU] hall, there’s pictures on the wall of past members, they’re all different colors and all different types of people but the one common factor to them is their hardness and their toughness.” Yet another interviewee painted the following wretched vision of life aboard ship in the past:

The diet is appalling, the work is ridiculous...you’re up there manually handling sails [so] almost everybody is herniated. Life expectancy is short...there’s no room [belowdecks], it’s wet, it’s cold in the winter and stuffy in the summer. You just didn’t want to be there...but some of the old guys, that’s all they knew. So it was incredibly hard and that’s why you had to have just absolute riff-raff...that’s why I [still] use ‘us waterfront riff-raff,’ y’know, we’re damn proud to be waterfront riff-raff, but it didn’t use to be that way.

The working conditions for merchant mariners have changed drastically in the past century, in tandem with changing financial and regulatory standards. However, the interviewees—both those who work at sea and those who work on shore—described parts of their own lives that echoed the above-mentioned themes of hardship conditions and high itinerancy. The comparison of their lives now, to how it was for late-nineteenth century sailors, shows a trajectory of conditions which, while significantly altered, represents an evolution, rather than a complete rupture. For one, many of the interviewees still had highly itinerant lives, and for some of them, this lifestyle has affected their social life ashore, both in terms of relating to friends, and in terms of marrying and starting a family. One described how his choice of home was—thanks to the advent of the airplane, and work schedules that allow for large stretches of time ashore—largely based on state tax laws: “After graduating [Cal Maritime]...I narrowed it down to seven states [with no income taxes]—there’s Alaska, Washington, Nevada, South Dakota, Texas, Florida and New Hampshire.” He later joked about how the back-and-forth schedule suited his social persona: “Most people can’t live the life. This isn’t my first rodeo with going to sea, I know I like it, also I know I’m better in small doses—my career helps out with that.” Others had similar themes of itinerancy in their lives, with one interviewee recalling how “I’ve been an Army chaplain in Bosnia and Lebanon; I’ve been a regular congregational pastor in several places in Norway, I was also 16 years working on the Norwegian oil platforms as an offshore chaplain,” and another detailing how “I met my wife in Berkeley, [California]...we got married in Oslo, Norway, in 1959, and since that time we have been traveling back and forth.”

And while the invention of the internet and affordable telephone communications have made it vastly easier to keep in touch while abroad or at sea, at least one interviewee reported an instance where communications between a sailor and his family were so difficult or infrequent as to allow the family to not know for an entire year that he had died. As he recalled:

A mother called me from Norway and said ‘I haven’t heard from my son for a year...he used to give life-signs from time to time, and he told me everything was fine and he had a Cadillac and a beautiful home and so on.’ So I got his address and went to look him up. The address was a bar run by a Norwegian. So I said ‘what happened to him?’ And he said ‘I have some letters [for him] here, because this was his address that letters were sent to. He died [suddenly, in the bath, at his apartment] a year ago.’ So I had to write all this to his mother. I also went to the Sailor’s Union and asked for a copy of his death certificate and it said “Birthplace? Unknown. Nationality? Unknown.’ I went to Colma [Cemetery] and found his grave and I took a picture of it and sent it to the mother, and she was most grateful, but she said ‘I want him back, I want him shipped to Norway...no matter what it costs’ so that’s what was done. While the [exhumed] corpse was being cremated, I had a service for him at the same time, I was singing hymns and saying prayers and so on. I was the only one there.

While this is an unusual example for sailors in recent times, it shows that as recently as the past few decades, mariners' lifestyles (itinerant, socially marginalized), might still distance them enough from those who knew them intimately, to the point where a sudden death might allow them to fall through the cracks.

And while conditions have changed enough so that, as one put it, "Today, the second mate or third mate, when he gets off the ship, he'll go back to his wife and two kids, cause we have airplanes, you don't have to live in San Francisco," the lifestyle is still affecting decisions around marriage and family. One described how:

I met my wife kind of late in life...I have a family now, a young family, so I waited a lot of years for that. I met these guys when I was 50, it's been great, but I have to tell you, the two months that I leave them [for the Cal Maritime training cruise], I don't feel very good about it, until I get on the ship, and start working with these young men and women, and then it makes it all worth it.

Another described a friend who explicitly gave up the lifestyle in exchange for a family, "[My friend] went to the Maritime Academy, sailed as mate for a little bit and then became a stock trader, really made money, quit the sea—he wanted a family."

Another interviewee recounted his own experience, "I shipped out [with the Merchant Marine] for four years I think and then I went back to construction, 'cause I wanted to be ashore and have a family. [When I went back again at age 45] I didn't do it with [young] children."

Also, while labor rights and practices have improved radically, interviewees and their colleagues still face extreme (sometimes dangerous) conditions. These could be from erratic leadership, as in one anecdote from an interviewee that “today [this doesn’t happen] nearly as much, but I remember brutal captains. I had a chief mate come after me with a wrench. He was a drunk, a screaming alcoholic,” and another anecdote from a second interviewee, how “even in 2006, a ship came in and there was a guy on there that I knew...he [told me] ‘the captain’s crazy, the crew’s ready to mutiny.’” The hardship faced by modern seamen might also stem from the difficult psychological and physical conditions aboard an ocean-going vessel, as in,

On one of those big container ships [now], a big crew might [only] be 20 [people] average. A really modern, automated ship could have as few as 17. Think about what I told you about the make-up of the crew: multiple nationalities, different cultures, they have psychological problems going out on the ship because people are alone. You may see your watch mates at chow, or something, but the social problems are huge, just being locked away on a ship where you’re doing a job for four months [or more] and not having somebody to interact with.

In terms of weather, one interviewee recalled a particularly bad trip where “we got stuck in 80 mile an hour winds out of the east and we had a counter-current coming out of the west on top of shallow water, so the waves stand up and get steep and close together, so we just got the sh-t pounded out of us for three days, no one slept. We went

negative three miles on my watch.” Work schedules at sea, while conforming to legal standards, are long and erratic, in that they run on a “watch” schedule which means multiple shifts on and off, per person, each day. The same interviewee continued; “when I get off dinner relief, usually around 6:30 [P.M.], I’ll try and catch a couple of hours of sleep and then when I get the most sleep is when I get off in the morning...around [3:45 A.M.] and head right to bed. And if I’m really lucky I’ll score about six hours. You split it up, you sleep a couple of hours after [the first shift] and then you sleep more after your [second shift].” His conclusion, that: “we do run sleep-deprived and we work long, hard hours, so there is that connection [to the working conditions of the past]” illustrates the evolution and connection between the old and new maritime work cultures.

“Stronger Than Family:” How Interviewees Self-Define Through Professional Identity

A second criterion for identifying a descendant community is whether there is evidence of the “self-identification” mentioned by Silliman and Ferguson (2010:49). To apply this criterion to my analysis of the ethnographic interviews, I looked for examples of emic self-identification as a sailor and as part of a group of sailors or the maritime industry. This theme of self-identification arose throughout my interviews as the interviewees claimed, negotiated and rejected aspects of what it might mean to be a professional mariner. I argue that each instance of comparison between the speaker and the profession (or professional persona)—even when speakers distance or reject certain aspects of the persona—represent their imagined relation to the sailor identity. These acts of imagination, as the interviewees navigate their understanding of their own individual relationship to the profession, amount to implicit self-identification as part of the larger community of maritime professionals throughout history.

In some cases the interviewees explicitly expressed this self-identification. One said, “First and foremost, I’m a sailor, when all the other guys began to notice the girls I said ‘push her out of the way so we can see the boat behind her.’” Others spoke of an early affinity and a personal calling to the profession, e.g. one who recalled that “I always loved the water, I learned to swim before I learned to walk” and another interviewee’s remark that “you can take the boy off the ship but you can’t take the ship out the boy.” Another recalled, “[I] came down [to Cal Maritime campus], there wasn’t much here in 1974 but when I came into this place...people say the hair on the back of your head [stands up]... it just did, this whole sensation came over me, and I knew this was where I wanted to be, and what I wanted to do, and that’s all I’ve ever done.”

More commonly, the self-identification occurred obliquely as interviewees positioned themselves either as part of, or in opposition to, an element of their professional culture. When positioning themselves as part of a larger group, interviewees used familial language and described scenes of intense camaraderie. One asserted that “sailors have a camaraderie, a consensus of ‘nobody’s any more important,’ everything is the crew, they’re like a family, [but] better than family...stronger than family.” Another interviewee colloquially referred both to living Coast Guard members and to those buried at the MMC as “brothers.” He also described an abstract sense of community between sailors, when he told me how in 2006, after reading Carl Nolte’s (2006) article breaking the news of the re-discovered cemetery, he went to visit the site in order to (figuratively) say “Hey Guys, welcome!” His visiting the site, and the solicitous feeling he describes, illustrate his sense of the bonds in the maritime community. In his eyes, the simple fact that the deceased were merchant mariners makes them “brothers,” and worthy of

acknowledgement among the living maritime community. It was important to his own sense of what his roles and responsibilities are as a leader in the maritime community—his sense of self—to foster a connection with the deceased population and re-enfold them into the living community of mariners.

Aside from familial language, interviewees used specialized lingo and mentioned rites of passage that sailors use to identify themselves and others as belonging or not belonging to the maritime community. Some of this lingo was deployed in the course of normal non-maritime speech, as with one interviewee who quipped that “[the doctors] said ‘maybe you got a bleeding ulcer,’ and [they] started doing the camera fore and aft...” or when interviewees and their colleagues began and ended emails with “ahoy” and “heave-ho.” Other lingo served both to unite and delineate groups within the maritime community. Seamen who haven’t crossed the equator are pollywogs; once they have, they’re Shellbacks. There are different names (which vary among themselves depending on who you ask) for crossing other major lines—Empire Penguin for Antarctic circle, Blue Nose for Arctic circle, Mossback for prime meridian, Golden Dragon for the international date line. Seamen learn what the ceremonies are for each line-crossing once their ship arrives at the crossing, though the ceremonial rites have adjusted in more recent days, as hazing became prohibited. Some of the slang was used teasingly towards other ethnicities, as in epithets like “Scandahoovians” or “Square-heads” to refer to Scandinavians. One interviewee repeatedly and affectionately referred to himself and other mariners as “waterfront riff-raff.” This vision of an overall sense of unity among mariners was reinforced as I was told, by multiple interviewees, that “the waterfront is a small place,” and “oh yeah, we all know each other.” Even between the longshoremen

and seamen, at least one interviewee asserted that “there’s always been a connection, we support each other in any kind of struggles. It doesn’t cross over as much as it used to, but it still does.” It was the norm, rather than the exception, for an interviewee to know one or more of the other interviewees, personally or by reputation.

Professional, fraternal, religious, and charitable organizations related to the profession also play a role in creating and maintaining the mariner identity. Most interviewees were involved with at least one, though more often several, maritime labor related organizations. While the organizing themes (e.g., Norwegian heritage, Catholic sea-going ministry, WWII Merchant Marine veterans’ rights, rank and type of professional credentials) varied extensively, the uniting factor was the unique history and culture of maritime labor. Furthermore, these organizations function as creators and perpetuators of the culture of maritime labor. By allying themselves, outside of work and to such a large degree, with “extra-curricular” maritime organizations, the interviewees are identifying themselves strongly by the sailor persona and as part of a larger community of maritime laborers.

While enumerating and embodying forms of *connection* was one avenue for expressing their identity as mariners, interviewees expended just as much energy defining themselves in *opposition* to others. This emerged at times as an “us v. them” mentality, as when one interviewee described the tension between the Merchant Marine and the Coast Guard:

The Coast Guard and the Merchant Marine don’t always see eye-to-eye.

They’re our safety regulators, and they give us our professional tests even

though they can't answer the questions themselves. They come in and say 'this is what we think,' [and] it's coming right from State Department, and we come in and say 'that's bullsh-t, here's what really happens at sea.' We're the ones out doing the job and I'll tell you, the Merchant Marine folk, we love the sea-going Coast Guard. Those guys out tending buoys, breaking ice, doing rescues, we say 'Huzzah, good on you, Brother.' And we are firm supporters of that. The people giving us tests and coming up with regulations? Not so much.

Another expressed similar frustration towards the (non Merchant-Marine) rule-makers: "[Some civilian in West Virginia is] telling me that I gotta do Basic Safety Training again after forty years at sea? You know how many fires I've fought on ships? I *run* the fire and boat drills on [the Cal Maritime training ship] but somebody's telling me that I gotta go do that!" In both of these narratives, the speakers define themselves and those they consider colleagues by their real-world, "boots on the ground," technical expertise. These qualities are outlined in contrast to those of the "outsiders," who are inactive, out-of-touch, and attempting to regulate something they do not understand. This definition of what constitutes "real" maritime professionals (being active, having front-line experience) is echoed in the motto for the King's Point Maritime Academy: "Acta non Verba—Deeds, not Words." The frustration expressed towards outsiders is not simply the frustration of dealing with inept management; it is also generated by their sense that these outsiders are in fact eroding their professional culture—which in turn threatens their very sense of self. As one interviewee put it:

The history and the character of this business is being a little bit lost in all the new policies and restrictions and requirements and procedures. It's like they're making you into a robot...so now, it's almost 'you guys have made it so not-fun that I'm just gonna go out and make that money, the hell with you people,' and that's it. There's no real characters anymore, you know, these bigger-than-life guys.

Interviewees also used definition-by-opposition with regards to other mariners. Similar to how families grapple with inter-generational conflict, there was a sense among interviewees that the younger (or older) generation held different values than themselves. The same speaker who regretted the disappearance of "real characters" pointed to Captain Moloney, his peer, as an example of one of this dying breed of "real characters." He then lamented, "a lot of the kids here, they don't get it, it's like they're playing at it, I don't think they really understand all the rich, hard-won freedoms and prosperity that the Merchant Marine has now...they're coming into a different Merchant Marine than I came into." When I relayed this opinion to a recent graduate of Cal Maritime, he agreed that "[The sense of tradition] is not the way it was 20 or 30 years ago" but felt it was still strong compared to other industries. He elaborated; "going to [Cal Maritime], we know what life was like on the ship [in the past], we learn the traditions. Our industry, our profession, is entrenched in tradition. So much so that captains are very uncompromising men because, 'this is not the way things should be, or the way things were when I was young.'" Both speakers strongly identified with the mariner identity, and the act of

disagreeing with one another illustrates how the creation of meaning and identity is an active process characterized by dynamic tension both among the members of a community and between those members and those they consider “outsiders.”

### **Forgotten, Remembered, Reimagined: The MMC as a Locus for the Creation of Meaning**

The second overarching goal of this research was to investigate the nature of interviewees’ interest in the cemetery—and particularly, their interest in the potential for archaeological and bioarchaeological research. What, if any, was their relationship to the site and to those buried there? What were their priorities for care and treatment of the site, and did they envision themselves interacting with it in the future? Given the answers to these questions, then, what research paradigm would best serve their interests? Based on their answers, I argue that an ethnographically-informed study of labor—bioarchaeological or otherwise—situated in the context of late nineteenth century maritime trade, and with an eye to what the findings will imply for this existing descendant community, would best serve the site and descendant community. This argument rests on two points: first, that the interviewees’ most consistently stated goal was for their story to be broadcast, and second, that the site is particularly well-suited—both as a source of new, unique information, and as a locus for collective memory and the creation of meaning—to telling the story of maritime labor.

#### Waterfront Riff-Raff: Telling the Story of The Exceptional Outcasts

Interviewees displayed a complicated relationship to “their story,” meaning both the story of the Merchant Marine and their versions of the sailor persona. They repeatedly espoused paradoxical, or seemingly conflicting, views on what it meant in the past and

now to be a mariner. On the one hand, they were intensely proud of their unique (and rare) skillsets, their enormous sets of credentials, accomplishments and experience, and their ability to face hardship conditions rarely seen in other lines of work. Interviewees were not shy about asserting their hard-earned bona fides, as in;

You won't meet too many people with more credentials than I have.

Between the four of us [two captains and the senior engineers] we've got 200 years of sea time. You can't throw an emergency at us that we haven't done or haven't talked about. When an earthquake hits, [stationary engineers say] 'ahhh the world is ending!' [and] our guys are going 'yawn, yeah, so?' Our people are trained for emergencies, it's just part of the gig. So...maritime engineers especially, but even us deck-types, we come with emergencies built in, it's all part of the package. Emergency? That's not an emergency, that's Wednesday.

The same interviewee also noted that "Merchant Marine officers are the last guys that do Morse code. I saw a radio guy in the Navy I went up and [tapped 'Hello' in Morse], he goes 'stop stop, I don't know that.'" Another interviewee stated simply and powerfully, "I graduated '78, I worked on a lot of ships [and then] was the first captain in my class, by far. So, a captain at 29, and my first command was 950 ft and 120,000 horsepower."

A third interviewee described the flip-side, the burden of being the most qualified person in the room:

You don't understand, the amount of responsibility...if you make a mistake that leads to an accident [even if] there was no mal-intent or malicious behavior, you can still go to jail. The captain of the vessel has always been responsible...for anything that goes down. And that's why we get paid so well, because we do shoulder this exhausting burden. But that's what keeps the dirtbags out: that it is a very serious business.

The longshoreman I spoke with also had an appreciation for the unique danger faced by mariners; “[As a longshoreman] I barely go out in the bay, so those guys are brave souls who go out in the ocean.”

On the other hand, these confident expressions of pride in themselves and their colleagues were tempered with humorous self-deprecation and by their sense that the public may hold negative perceptions about them—or, what's worse, may not know anything about them. One said, “there's still a stigma to it, it's not for polite society, mainly because people have no idea what we do. People don't want to see seamen.” Another agreed that “99% of the rest of the country...don't know jack about this business. [The public] haven't been exposed to it.” One interviewee expressed frustration at the negative stereotyping of sailors by the public:

I think everybody thinks all the people in the Merchant Marine are like [the movie] *Captain Ron*—like, we're drunk and we party and f---k around, and they see us as uneducated and uncouth people, but in fact,

we're very intelligent, a lot of us, we're very well educated, well trained, and we're incredibly responsible...and I'm a sailor but I'm also a religious person, too, so, we don't fit neatly into any one envelope or category.

Interviewees also turned the stereotypes and stigma on their head, using them to indicate a sense of belonging, as when one said (with a sense of humor) "Captain Bolton, he's good people, he's a mariner, one of us, one of the 'uncouth, unwashed' people. He uses dirty words too...we're all 'waterfront riff-raff.'" Interviewees lamented the lack of public awareness of their profession, and struggled against stereotypes that reduced the reality of their complex individuality—even if they, in the next breath (as with the phrase "waterfront riff-raff") heartily endorsed those stereotypes, as long as they were taken on the speaker's own terms. Nearing the end of one interview, one interviewee cheerfully encouraged me to call him if I had any more questions, saying, "I tell sea stories, but I don't lie, and I don't exaggerate."

This complex relation to the mariner persona was echoed in the various ways interviewees spoke about the cemetery's potential to add worthwhile information to the understanding of maritime history. On the one hand, interviewees expressed a desire for the public to better understand their profession, but many of them also denigrated the research value of the site. A painful theme in the Merchant Marine community is the failure of the U.S. government to recognize (symbolically or financially) the veteran status of mariners who served (albeit as civilians) in WWII. This, along with the sense that the U.S. public does not appreciate the economic importance of maritime industry, or even know what the work entails, creates an eagerness among those I spoke with to

promote the story of the Merchant Marine. One interviewee explained his motivation to add dimension to the narrative of the Merchant Marine, in the greater context of human history:

There are subtle feelings that place us in the world, and we need to know them, so that we understand everything that's going on. We need to spend more time getting these subtle stories. We need to know all these [historical] reasons [behind bigger events] to get the full feeling of what's happening [today], to relate to it, to feel it. I think that we owe something to history...My view on [potential research at the MMC] is; is this [only] gonna help us in science, or is this gonna help us in remembering our story? Our story is important, and we don't often realize how important it is.

Interviewees also cared deeply about the stories of the past, with many of them professing a love for maritime history, e.g., “my non-fiction library is four-thousand books, an awful lot of them are maritime and military sea history. So I've studied this just because I love the subject.” They expressed interest in fictional accounts of regular mariners in the past, e.g., “the beauty of [Patrick O'Brien's books] is for the first time you really got into the home life. What it was like when you came home; what it was like when you got put on the beach and you didn't have that ship to go back to...even though you're going out into horrific danger, you'd rather do that than hang out at home. And the leadership lessons that you learn from this very humble captain...”. When I asked what

more he might want to learn about nineteenth-century mariners, one interviewee expressed curiosity about the minutiae of life ashore for the average mariner on leave: “I’d love to know more about—what’d they do on land? I don’t mean just that first week when they had money and they were with hookers. How long were they on land? What’d they do in their off time? Was their life [on land] like ours...did they sleep in, did they grab coffee at 10 o’clock in the morning cause that was early for them on their off-time?” While their curiosity was piqued by vivid, descriptive narratives and imagination of what life was like for the average nineteenth century mariner, the suggestion that research at the MMC might contribute to an important historical narrative was often dismissed. Several interviewees assumed that the conclusions would be predictable, as in one interviewee’s assertion that “It’s not gonna be anything particular that you find. They’re gonna be poor people that died destitute and nobody to claim ‘em... People can say, ‘what was killing these people?’ I’m telling you, it was hernias — and then the respiratory diseases, TB was huge,” and another interviewee’s assumption that “they’re all syphilitic.” Interviewees also dismissed the idea that the stories would be interesting or worthwhile, because, as one said, “it’s such an anonymous group—nothing special about ‘em. These guys are the outcasts, and there’s nothing really that makes it worthwhile tracking things down... it’s not a historical thing.” This idea, of what merited historical significance, came up repeatedly, and surprised me, in that the same people who deeply enjoyed historical fiction about everyday mariners of the past, also dismissed the research potential of the MMC precisely because it was populated by “normal” people.

History With a Small “H”: How Research at the MMC Would Provide a Unique Perspective on the Story of the Merchant Marine

The interviewees repeatedly emphasized both their deep connection to the unique culture of their profession and their feeling that the public understanding of their profession was skewed or non-existent. However, interviewees also had mixed reactions to the idea that research at the MMC might contribute anything of value to their history. Several interviewees argued that research would probably not be “worth it.” Interviewees assumed that they or researchers would be able to predict what researchers would find, in terms of demographics and paleopathology. Further, they felt it would not be worth the effort because researchers “would not find anything in particular,” because those buried at the cemetery were not historical figures, and they did not equate the site on a level with, e.g., Jamestown or Arlington national cemetery.

In contrast, I argue that bioarchaeology provides unique data which, when used along with historical records, adds a crucial dimension to our understanding of life in the past. Further, these data are in fact part of the overall story of the Merchant Marine. As bioarchaeologists studying the remains of Chinese immigrants working on nineteenth century railways wrote;

Changing international policy, racial sentiment, changes in the local ecology, seasonality, or...diet, can all alter one’s skeletal health, growth, development, and risk of injury. Thus, when used creatively, skeletal data can illuminate anthropological understandings of a wide variety of

biosocial processes such as urbanization, immigration, trade...increasing sociopolitical inequality [etc.]” (Harrod and Crandall 2015:152).

A bioarchaeological study at the MMC should look at similar kinds of skeletal data but with a focus on labor as the uniting factor (rather than ancestry/immigration, as in Harrod and Crandall’s work). This follows Shackel’s definition of the “new labor history,” as a paradigm that “[provides] a voice for the people who have been neglected, oppressed, and considered outcasts.” This would allow researchers to address questions related to aspects of maritime labor—e.g., what is the overall picture of individuals’ well-being, and how does it fit (or not) into our current understanding of the physical labor conditions in nineteenth-century maritime labor? What patterns or idiosyncrasies emerge in the data, and can these be connected to the specific contexts relevant to the MMC’s time period? For one, the 1896 *SF Call* article (SFC 29 March 1896:19) asserts that “the proportion of Americans [buried at the cemetery] is remarkably small, which fact is accounted for by the American preference for a life on land, and also by the better treatment as a rule accorded sailors on American ship.” This is contradicted by the (admittedly flawed) hospital records analyzed by McCann (2006:13), which show Americans as the majority group buried at the MMC. Analysis of stable strontium and oxygen isotopes from skeletal remains has the potential to infer childhood residence (Larsen 1997:289), which could provide at least a rough sketch of foreign-born versus non-foreign-born individuals, and from there, allow other questions such as differential overall health to be raised. Other isotopic samples (e.g., of carbon and nitrogen) may be used to infer ratios of what kinds of foods individuals ate, and how that changed

throughout their life (White et al. 2012:484). The major labor rights reforms passed in the middle of the period of use for the cemetery—the 1895 Maguire Act, 1898 White Act and 1915 Seamen’s Act—ended corporal punishment legally, if not entirely, yet, in practice, and established a baseline of rights for provision of adequate food aboard ships, among others. One might thus expect to see a drop in metabolic disease and an increase in overall health in the skeletal record for adults who died after the passage of these act. This proposal is complicated by the questions of whether enough time would have passed for the effects of the laws to be visible in the skeleton, whether these laws would have applied to all individuals buried at the MMC, and whether the sample size would be large enough to make meaningful comparisons to earlier populations.

Bioarchaeological research has the potential to add a unique set of data to the larger narrative of what life was like for nineteenth-century merchant mariners. While their interest in and moral opinion of bioarchaeological research varied, the overall agreement among interviewees was that the story of the Merchant Marine was not well understood in the U.S., but that it was important to tell. One interviewee emailed me after our meeting to reiterate his opinion that “it is important for people, in this modern time and age, to be reminded of the history and hardships of the seamen in the Merchant Marine.” Another interviewee felt particularly strongly about the implications of the cemetery’s past neglect and linked it explicitly to labor struggles of the past:

Disrespect, to me, is [when you cover] up our past. It’s even worse that these are people that were working class people that contributed a lot to the country and now nobody even knows. Especially because—and don’t

take this wrong—[but] some people would like to bury the labor movement. The business world, the corporate world, they would like to bury it and not have the younger generation understand what went on to get where you are today, and we're still struggling just for basic things, so when you cover something up, to me, that reminds me of 'we don't want nobody to know what really went on.' And these merchant seamen have been disrespected for so many years. A lot of the merchant seamen served our country in WWII and they were a huge part of the success—[the enemy] were sinking ships left and right and these guys were going out, and they knew one out of five ships was going down, and they kept serving their country, and they're kind of lost heroes.

So while there were as many different opinions about why the history of the Merchant Marine mattered as there were on how to tell it, interviewees were in agreement that theirs was an important yet underrepresented history. Based on my previous research and on these ethnographic interviews, I argue that the MMC is particularly suited for bioarchaeological, archaeological, historical and ethnographic investigations which seek to better understand how nineteenth century merchant mariners, as individuals and as a group, physically navigated their professional lives, in the context of evolving labor practices and increasing globalization.

The MMC also has rich potential as a site for the creation of meaning among this descendant community. Were further research—sub-surface or not—to occur, it would almost certainly be of interest to them, and I would anticipate a strong potential for

similar outcomes as experienced after excavations and subsequent public exhibit of research findings at the FABC, such as the strengthening of community identity and an increase in “cultural pride and community involvement” (Crist and Roberts 1996:6; Jeppson 2007:6).

Even in the absence of ground-disturbing research, there is a great potential for researchers and stakeholders to cooperate in the creation of meaning at the site. Several interviewees mentioned an interest in engaging in annual commemorative activities (e.g., wreath-laying) at the site. As a parallel to what sort of commemorative activity might be appropriate at the MMC, another interviewee described how his own organization commemorated those killed in the 1934 dockworkers strike (“Bloody Thursday”) each year by recreating the chalk outlines where the bodies had fallen and laying flowers around the outlines. He was unsure whether any dock workers were buried at the MMC, but stressed the importance of keeping labor history alive. Another interviewee said, “First, I think we *should* do something at the site like we do at Port Chicago. We could be going once a year and spending an hour commemorating the guys that have ‘passed over the bar.’” These are acts that strengthen the figurative kinship relationship between the buried mariners and those alive today. They also bear a similarity to the memorial ceremonies described in the 1896 SF Call article describing the cemetery:

‘About the last thing the crews of ships have done in San Francisco before sailing,’ said an officer of the hospital, pointing toward the few monuments, ‘was to come out here and decorate the graves of their dead comrades....Some of the other fences and flowers were placed there by

friends of the sailors. They were all seamen, and as far as I knew had nothing in common more than a warm heart for one another' (SFC 29 March 1896:19).

The commemorative activity might also include public lectures and tours (perhaps cross-programming with the NPS, which operates the Maritime National Historical park) on the topic of the Merchant Marine's history in San Francisco and the physical evidence of that history in and near the Presidio, e.g., the MMC and the "Lone Sailor" statue on the northern end of the Golden Gate bridge. Activities like these, particularly when co-authored by stewards of heritage and stakeholders, allow for the creation of new meanings and, potentially, alternate or competing versions of the narrative that might not otherwise be told. I argue that both the physical site of the MMC, and the complex, subtle stories it has the potential to evoke, are ideal grounds for situating and deepening the story (stories) of the Merchant Marine, as the men I interviewed called for.

## Chapter 6. Conclusion

“Without living descendants to speak for them, the dead become disenfranchised”  
(Lillie and Mack 2015:179).

This chapter proposes recommendations for collaborating with modern day seamen as a de facto descendant community for those buried at the MMC, as well as recommendations for any potential future archaeological and bioarchaeological research in the MMC. While there are no, nor are there likely to be, imminent plans for ground-disturbing research at the MMC, it would be prudent to be prepared for the possibility. Seismic activity or new development plans might occur down the road, or researchers at the Presidio might decide that a research question is compelling enough to warrant the consideration of archaeological inquiry at the site. These recommendations, first, lay a groundwork for how and why to partner with modern day merchant mariners as a descendant community. Further, I will make recommendations for a bioarchaeological study of labor that prioritizes the needs and interests of modern day merchant mariners. Finally, this chapter discusses the significance of this research to the discipline of anthropology, to this descendant community, and to the Presidio Trust, and suggests further avenues for research.

### Recommendations

In order to provide the most benefit both to the integrity of the research, and to this descendant community, partnering with this descendant community should begin before decisions are made about a site’s future. In light of this, I recommend that the

Presidio Trust (PT) cultivate a relationship now with members of this descendant community, around the Marine Cemetery Vista - the name given by the Presidio Trust to the viewing/interpretive area adjacent to the MMC. This descendant community is connected by a plethora of maritime-related organizations and institutions, and it will be important to cast a broad net and include as many members of these as possible.

I also recommend that future researchers clearly state their mandate to uphold professional standards and best practices, as well as the specifics of those standards. Many interviewees implied or joked that I or other researchers might excavate the MMC “just because,” i.e. without a clear goal and without care or sensitivity to the burials. In any discussion of excavation, even hypothetical, I recommend that the project researchers clearly present which of the existing ethical and best practices standards for working with human remains (e.g., AAPA 2003 code of ethics, Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994) they intend to operate under, and clarify what the pertinent implications are for each. Beyond technical standards and best practices, Baugher and Veit (2014:34) provide a sketch of how collaboration with descendant communities ought to proceed, which is worth briefly quoting:

Before any belowground excavations are undertaken, the ethical questions need to be addressed...[are] the descendants opposed to excavation...[can] some of our research questions be answered through oral histories...and the aboveground study of cemeteries [including remote sensing] rather than undertaking [excavation]? If a community does grant permission for excavation...all issues relating to the time limits for analysis and the

conditions regarding reburial... must be agreed upon before excavation begins.

To summarize, Baugher and Veit advocate (and I agree) that it will be essential to address the descendant communities' potential concerns, opposition to, and parameters for research/reburial *before* it is planned for or excavation occurs.

Recommendations for Bioarchaeological and Archaeological Research, and for the Study of Labor

The overarching framework for bioarchaeology at the MMC ought to incorporate the biocultural approach. The biocultural approach, as described by Zuckerman and Armelagos (2011:20), posits individual health as a dynamic expression of an individual's interaction with their specific physical and sociocultural environments. A key objective of the biocultural approach is to not only examine how health and disease interplay between the individual, the external environment, and culture, but to intentionally examine the cultural systems themselves as a dynamic factor within this process, rather than accepting them as a static given (Zuckerman and Armelagos 2011:21). This framework will allow the osteological data for each individual to be considered in the cultural and social contexts relevant to the MMC (as one example, the context of nineteenth century maritime labor conditions, and how they changed over time).

One interviewee wanted to know whether the point of potential research at the MMC would be "just for science," or "to tell our story," as he felt that the latter alone would be a worthy contribution. His assumption that it had to be one or the other points to a past failure of archaeological practitioners to frame and communicate their findings

in the relevant contexts. A research objective that is contextualized within the site's specific parameters, which incorporates multiple lines of evidence, and which anticipates the implications it might have for the welfare of this modern day descendant community, would combine the goals of science and of telling a story.

Research at the MMC must seek out and address this descendant community's priorities and interests for potential research there. From the small sample of eight interviews, it is likely that these will include but not be limited to the following concerns. Above all, interviewees were concerned with issues of respect towards the burials. Several of them expressed partial or complete disapproval towards the study of human remains, in general. All of the interviewees sought assurance of respectful treatment for the burials and several mentioned the importance of ensuring that the cemetery would not be lost again. Several of them also expressed an interest in preserving what archival information exists on who is buried there. For those who expressed interest in the possibility of further research, bioarchaeological or otherwise, their interests included the following topics. One interviewee expressed an interest in learning more about the historical spread of diseases, as San Francisco was an important port of call (and potential disease incubator) in a globalizing nineteenth-century world. Several interviewees were curious in a general way about what more there might be to learn about the daily life of nineteenth century seamen, with one wondering what life ashore (off duty) was like for these men, i.e. was it similar to his experience today. Two other interviewees emphasized the importance of broadcasting what was learned, with emphases on "telling our story...telling subtle stories" and "bringing the past to life."

From a bioarchaeological perspective and in terms of collaborating, I recommend using any osteological data that becomes available to address questions of health in the context of nineteenth century maritime labor, and to explore the implications that they might have for the evolving history of the Merchant Marine. As mentioned above, one interviewee assumed that most of the buried seamen would have suffered from hernias. The presence of Schmorl's nodes in the vertebrae, which appear when intervertebral discs degenerate and protrude into the vertebral body, is one way to assess this claim, as trauma and strenuous axial loading of the vertebrae are implicated as etiologies for this pathology (Roberts and Manchester 2005:140, 143). Another interviewee assumed that the buried individuals would "all be syphilitic," which could be proved or disproved through osteological analysis. Venereal syphilis may be identified by the presence of distinctive, irregular lesions (*caries sicca*) involving the frontal and parietal bones of the skull (Roberts and Manchester 2005:210). Many of the health factors noted by McCann (2006) (e.g., scurvy, STDs, trauma ("struck by sling-load of cement")) may potentially be identified in the skeletal record.

Other avenues of research also have potential to contribute to a bioarchaeology of maritime labor. Morphological and pathological changes at sites of muscle attachment (like those noted in enslaved individuals from the New York African Burial Ground (Mack and Blakey 2004:12)) may be linked to strenuous labor and work-related trauma. Analysis of these markers of occupational stress at the MMC, particularly if compared to contemporaneous populations of non-seamen, may inform our understandings of the characteristics of nineteenth-century maritime labor. Both Mack and Blakey (2004) and Harrod and Crandall (2015) stress the importance of considering the specifics of a

population's culture of labor (enslaved heavy labor and railway construction, respectively) on what they might expect to see in the overall health of the population. Markers of health and diet, as well as of occupational stress, are potentially visible in the skeleton. They may be seen via stable isotopic analysis of diet, as in Roberts et al. (2012:9), who used their analysis of various cemetery populations of British naval hospitals to confirm the historical records that the British Navy diet remained unchanged (and surprisingly adequate) from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. Implications for overall health and diet may also be gleaned from dental pathologies, forms of osteoarthritis, and nonspecific indicators of stress on the skeleton such as periosteal reactions and porotic hyperostosis, among others. For nineteenth century merchant mariners, quality of life was largely inseparable from labor conditions, so an analysis of these markers would likely have direct implications as to laborers' experiences in the maritime industry.

However, there are limits to what researchers can learn from osteological analysis: for example, tuberculosis progresses to the skeleton in fewer than 10% of all cases (Buikstra and Beck 2006:308). Further, it is highly unlikely that positive identifications of individuals can be made, due to lack of contextual information. While it will be important for researchers to apply realistic limitations to what they will be able to discover, it is equally important that they push themselves to think creatively about how their research might address larger themes in the history of the Merchant Marine.

This research presents a model for how ethnography may be used to identify a figurative descendant community for a historic-era cemetery. Further, it addresses recent

calls by bioarchaeologists for research that uses osteological data creatively to address the social, cultural and environmental milieu in which the buried individuals lived.

In terms of this descendant community and the Presidio Trust, this research presents a picture (albeit narrow) of what the modern day Merchant Marine community knows and feels about the MMC, and about the potential of future research there. Interviewees repeatedly stated their desire that the public profile of the Merchant Marine be raised and expanded (beyond the “riff-raff” stereotype). In a modest way, this project raises scholarly awareness of the potential for additional archaeological study of the maritime profession. Perhaps more importantly, it encourages further collaboration between the Presidio Trust and the various groups and individuals employed in the maritime profession today.

### **Future Directions for Research**

Future directions for research include specific ideas of promising research angles as well as more general ideas for how to broaden the sample size demographically, and how to think more critically about why researchers might consider this group a descendant community.

To begin, researchers might reach out to individuals at the Sailors Union of the Pacific (SUP), in order to explore whether this seamen’s counterpart to the ILWU is as politically engaged and responsive as interviewee and longshoreman Mike Villegiante made the ILWU seem. Berwick’s (1993) and Schwartz’s (2009:70) books provide a fascinating account of the mid-century schism between the ILWU and SUP based on diverging ideas on how best to promote Union goals (for example, accusations of

“communism” came between them). San Francisco is a city with a nationally significant role in maritime labor rights struggles, as recorded by folklorist Archie Green, who asserted that “work alienates its subjects, and...also blesses them by conferring personal and community identity” (Green 2006b:34). Green’s prolific writing on the maritime labor culture of San Francisco would itself be an excellent starting point for future researchers. Thinking again of the research potential of the MMC, sociopolitical beliefs (held individually or as a collective body) have much to do with labor advocacy and would inform researchers’ understanding of members of this descendant community’s priorities for what kinds of research questions about the MMC matter to them, and for what kinds of stories they hope to learn or tell.

Another potential direction for future research is the theme of masculinity as a defining feature of the American maritime industry. The sense that the professional identity is gendered arose in historical texts and in speaking with interviewees. This may relate to the “laborer-adventurer” mythos mentioned by McGuire and Reckner (2002), but was such a striking pattern that it bears further examination. On a related note, it would also be important to talk to some women in the field, with two goals in mind. One goal would be to investigate whether they experience the professional identity as gendered, if or how this affects their sense of connection to the professional mariner identity, and how the entrance of women into this arena has impacted the professional culture. The second goal would be to fill the gap left in the ethnographic record for this descendant community, since there are a small but increasing percentage of women employed in the Merchant Marine, yet my sample group was entirely men.

Future research would certainly benefit from the aforementioned expansion of scope to include more individuals, including women, of more diverse ethnicities, nationalities and a broader age range. My initial research design also included two assumptions that bear questioning, going forward. My first assumption was that San Francisco (or Northern California) merchant mariners would be the most appropriate group to approach as potential figurative descendants, as they lived close enough to the MMC to where they might consider visiting or interacting with it in some capacity. While proximity may affect individuals' likelihood of interacting with the site, the assumption that proximity is enough to define a population becomes problematic when we consider that the inhabitants of the MMC represent a globally diverse population of various ethnicities and nationalities of merchant mariners. My second assumption was that "descendant community" was the most appropriate definition to work with, in the context of a cemetery (whose inhabitants were unlikely to have left biological descendants). There are other, not necessarily exclusive, ways to think of this group of interviewees—e.g., as stakeholders, as site stewards. Each definition has implications for assumed identity and for how that group might relate to the MMC. Future researchers ought to consider these implications, and work towards an iterative process of collaborative meaning-making with stakeholders.

## **Summary**

“About the last thing the crews of ships have done in San Francisco before sailing was to come out here and decorate the graves of their dead comrades. They were

all seamen, and as far as I knew had nothing in common more than a warm heart  
for one another.” SF Call 1896

“I was at the doctor’s one time and I noticed a big box, and they were throwing  
files in it, you know, ‘cause these guys are dead. I’d look at their home address: 450  
Harrison, 450 Harrison, [the address of the Sailors Union of the Pacific in San Francisco.]

So these guys had no home.” Interviewee recollection 2014

This thesis used archival and scholarly research and original ethnographic  
interviews to address its three research aims. The first aim, to assess the MMC as a  
potential site for bioarchaeological research, looked at what was known of the sub-  
surface conditions at the MMC, at research on similar sites in the Bay Area, and at  
scholarly research pertinent to the defining features of the MMC. The second and third  
aims asked whether—in the absence of easily identifiable lineal descendants—modern  
day merchant mariners could and ought to be considered a figurative descendant  
community and, if so, what their connection to the MMC and interest in further research  
there might be.

Through themes arising from the ethnographic interviews, I conclude that modern  
day merchant mariners are indeed the most appropriate group to partner with as a  
figurative descendant community. While there is a range of opinion on and level of  
interest in learning more about the MMC, interviewees were unanimous in their ethical  
concern for those buried at the MMC and in their desire that the story of maritime labor,  
and the Merchant Marine in particular, be given finer nuance and wider dissemination.

Further, through the background research and from the interviews, I conclude that the MMC has an exceptionally high research potential, particularly as a site for the bioarchaeological study of labor, but that any future research (subsurface or otherwise) must address the needs and interests of the modern day Merchant Marine community.

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## Appendix A. Interview Guide

### Interview Guide

#### *Tier 1:*

- Can you describe your employer and what you do for them?
- How did you come to live in the Bay Area (*or wherever they live*)?
- How did you come to work in this position?
- How long have you been working in (*OR studying*) this industry?
- Can you describe your typical day?
- Do you belong to any work or professional organizations – like unions, or fraternal orders?
- Where do your coworkers come from? (Locally, international, born here or second generation or more?)
  
- What comes to mind when you imagine maritime professionals from the past?
- What aspects of life for maritime laborers in the past would you want to know more about?
- Have you heard of the Merchant Marine Cemetery at the Presidio of San Francisco? (*If yes:*) What do you know about it?
- What would you like to know about the people buried there? ***\* Share bioarch handout, explain that it's one way to learn about them, along with archival research \****
- Do you feel any connection to the cemetery or the people buried there?
- (*With photos from San Bruno archive*) Do you have anything like this?
- Do you think you would visit the cemetery? Why or why not?
- How might you want it memorialized?
- What would you want people to know about you, if you had died and been buried in a foreign port?

#### *Tier 2 (if time allows):*

- What is the biggest change or changes – either in the industry, or in your personal experience of the job – that you've seen over the course of your career?
- How do you think the public perceives maritime professionals? Does this depend on the specific kind of work?
- What would you want the public to know about the kind of work you do?

#### *Finally:*

- Do you think there are other groups or individuals I should talk to, or who would be interested in learning more about the MMC?

## Appendix B. Bioarchaeology Handout

### Bio-archaeology

*Bioarchaeology is the contextualized study of human remains – most often, of bones. Bioarchaeologists study bones, artifacts associated with burials, and the area around the burial in order to learn more about how individuals or groups of people lived in the past. It provides one more piece of the puzzle for archaeologists looking at the material record of history.*

#### What bioarchaeological research **can** tell us:

- Individual information: How tall was this person? Roughly how old? What sex were they? What ancestry did they likely belong to? What kinds of food were they eating? Where did this person grow up? What injuries, diseases, or physical wear-and-tear did this person experience?
- Demographic information: Among a large group of burials, we can ask: What was the ratio of male to female? Of young to old? Are there similarities or patterns in how they were buried?
- DNA (when it is possible to recover it) can suggest ancestry and prove descent, if there is a modern descendant to compare to.

#### What it **cannot (or not always)** tell us:

- How someone died – most diseases or causes of death do *not* leave evidence on the skeleton.
- Everything about a person's health during their life – both because most diseases do not leave marks on the skeleton and also because, even if they do, bone may heal (and "erase" the marks) if the person survives.
- An exact ID. Even in more recent history, there may not be enough surviving contextual information (dental records, cemetery records) to pinpoint the exact identity.

## Appendix C. Informed Consent Statement

### *Informed Consent Statement*

**Title:** Ethnographic Study of Modern and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Cultures of Maritime Employment in the Bay Area

**Researcher:**  
Camilla Rockefeller

**Faculty Supervisor:**  
Dr. Alexis Boutin

**Description:** This project involves ethnographic interviews as part of thesis research towards a Master's Degree in Cultural Resources Management at Sonoma State University (SSU). These data may also be used for conference papers or posters, for publication, and by the Presidio Staff, as part of a management plan. The purpose of the research is to explore the culture of maritime employment in the Bay Area and to learn how participants may be interested in and connected with the history of local maritime labor. In particular, this project considers how present day maritime professionals may be thought of as the figurative "descendants" of 19<sup>th</sup> century maritime professionals and seeks to include their input in a potential management plan for a Merchant Marine cemetery.

During this study, you will be asked to answer some questions relating to your professional and personal experience with the maritime industry. Each interview is designed to last from 30 minutes to an hour in length. However, please feel free to expand on each question or talk about related ideas. Also, if there are any questions you feel you cannot answer or that you do not feel comfortable answering, feel free to indicate this and we will move on to the next question.

**Confidentiality:** All the information will be kept confidential. I will keep the data on a password-protected computer at my home. Only myself and the faculty supervisor mentioned above will have access to this information. This interview is designed to learn first-hand information about this topic. Upon completion of this project, all data will be destroyed or stored in a secure location.

**Participant's Agreement:**

I am aware that my participation in this interview is voluntary. If, for any reason, at any time, I wish to stop the interview, I may do so without having to give an explanation. I understand the intent and purpose of this research.

I am aware that the data will be used as part of a Master's thesis. I have the right to review, comment on, and/or withdraw information prior to the thesis submission. The data gathered in this study are confidential and anonymous with respect to my personal identity unless I specify/indicate otherwise.

I grant permission for the use of this information for a *[Participant to initial permission(s)]*

- Master's thesis and management plan  
 Published article or conference presentation/poster

I grant permission to use one of the following *[Participant to initial permission]:*

- My full name  
 My first name only  
 Just a pseudonym

Additional conditions for my participation in this research are noted here:

*[possible conditions: destruction of digital audio file, distribution of final product as well as other original material(s) e.g. transcription of interviews.*

I have read the above form, and, with the understanding that I can withdraw at any time, and for whatever reason, I consent to participate in today's interview.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer's signature

<b>Appendix D. Interview Metadata (Table 1 of 2)</b>				
<b>Name</b>	Captain Patrick Moloney	Mike Villagiate	Captain Alan Hugenot	Pastor Tormod Woxen
<b>Date of Interview</b>	March 5, 2014	March 6, 2014	March 18, 2014	March 20, 2014
<b>Professional title at time of interview</b>	Executive Director at National Liberty Ship Memorial; Volunteer Master/Port Captain of The Jeremiah O'Brien	member of ILWU Local 10 - Longshoremen	Marine Surveyor and architect; Expert witness	Interim Pastor at Norwegian Seaman's church of San Francisco
<b>Relevant previous employment</b>	U.S. Navy; Executive Director at Board of Pilot Commissioners; Marine Superintendent at Military Sealift Command	ex-President of ILWU Local 10	Quartermaster Navigator in U.S. Navy; Master and Chief Mate on cruise line; Writer at "The Log," boating newspaper	Pastor of Sjømannskirken (Seamen's Church) in New York City, London
<b>Professional &amp; fraternal affiliations</b>	CAMM (Council of American Master Mariners); E Clampus Vitus; King's Point Academy	ILWU (International Longshore and Warehouse Union); BALMA (Bay Area Longshoremen's Memorial Association)	SNAME (Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers); IANDS (International Association for Near Death Studies); Noetic Society	
<b>Native of Bay Area? (Y/N)</b>	N - from Southern California	Y - and father worked in ILWU	N - but Californian	N
<b>Nationality</b>	American	American	American	Norwegian
<b>Interested in bioarchaeological work at MMC?</b>	N - implies that he feels this way because those buried at MMC are "regular," i.e. not historical figures	Unclear	Y - but he qualifies the yes, "is this going to help us in science, or is this going to help us tell our story?" He wants story told because "We owe something to history"	Y

<b>Appendix D. Interview Metadata (Table 2 of 2)</b>				
<b>Name</b>	Captain Harry Bolton	Captain Kerry C. O'Brien	William Filbeck	Pastor Dagfinn Kvale
<b>Date of Interview</b>	March 27, 2014	March 29, 2014	April 7, 2014	April 8, 2014
<b>Professional title at time of interview</b>	Director, Marine Programs; Captain of the Cal Maritime Academy training ship, the Golden Bear	Retired	2nd Mate at Foss Maritime	Pastor (retired)
<b>Relevant previous employment</b>	Sailed with General Dynamics/American Overseas Marine, including support to U.S. Military during Gulf War and Iraqi Freedom; consultant to Marine Corps and U.S. Navy; expert witness	U.S. Navy; various Merchant Marine positions	Seascouts; U.S. Coast Guard	Pastor of Sjømannskirken (Seamen's Church) in London, Oslo; Librarian at Theological Seminary of San Anselmo
<b>Professional &amp; fraternal affiliations</b>	Cal Maritime graduate; CAMM; The Nautical Institute; The Boston Marine Society	AMMV (American Merchant Marine Veterans)	Cal Maritime graduate	
<b>Native of Bay Area? (Y/N)</b>	Y	Y - family moved here when six years old	Y - if you count Stockton	N
<b>Nationality</b>	American	American	American	Norwegian
<b>Interested in bioarchaeological work at MMC?</b>	Unclear -generally, he is interested in his family history, historic-era cemeteries and historic sites	N - "would be waste of time," also implies it would be sacrilegious	Y	Unclear