

SAILORS' SNUG HARBOR COLLECTION

A Special Collection in

The Archives and Library of

THE STATEN ISLAND MUSEUM

75 Stuyvesant Place, Staten Island, New York 10301

Arranged and Described by

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PROVENANCE:

The materials now in the Sailors' Snug Harbor Collection were all drawn from other collections housed here in the Archives at the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences. Prints and photographs of the Harbor came from the Print Collection and Photograph Collection; many of the early news clippings and booklets were from the "Shirtbox Collections" established by William T. Davis, one of the founders of the SIIAS. Barnett Shepherd, architectural historian, also added in great part to the recent material now housed in this collection in preparation for his study of Sailors' Snug Harbor. These materials were all gathered together in one collection to help in the Institute's efforts to gain Landmark status for the Harbor.

HISTORICAL NOTE:

Sailors' Snug Harbor was established in 1833 on a 130-acre site on Staten Island's North Shore, by the terms of Robert Richard Randall's will, to provide a home for "aged, decrepit and worn-out sailors." Mr. Randall, bachelor son of a wealthy privateer, had died in 1801 but lawsuits contesting the will had delayed the asylum's establishment. The income to support the Harbor was derived from the rents on Randall's land, at the time of his death a farm in what is now the Washington Square area of Manhattan.

The majority of the buildings were constructed between 1833 and 1895, and Sailors' Snug Harbor was at its height at the turn of the century with 950 residents. Its prosperity continued through the 1930s, thanks to the income from the Manhattan properties. But with the 1940s and the advent of better provisions for the elderly and the consequent decline of applicant sailors to the Harbor, this began to change. In 1950, with growing public awareness that the Harbor was having financial difficulties, the Trustees decided to demolish many of the older buildings, and to modernize others. At first, this caused little concern among Staten Islanders, but by the 1960s, when the Harbor developed a plan whereby all the buildings except the 5 1833 Greek Revival buildings and the 1854 Chapel would be razed to make room for high-rise apartments, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission proposed designation for the remaining buildings. In 1971 the Trustees decided to move to Sea Level, North Carolina, and they agreed to sell 13 acres of land with the principal buildings to the City, and to stop their opposition to the Landmarks designations. The Staten Island Institute applied their capital budget intended for a new building to the purchase price of the Harbor land and buildings, and after much dispute the remaining land was acquired by New York City as parklands. The site will thus remain unharmed and the buildings that remain will hopefully be restored to their earlier beauty in their current incarnation as Snug Harbor Cultural Center.

SCOPE & CONTENT:

This collection consists of 7 one-cubic-foot boxes of manuscript and printed materials and clippings, 1 two-cubic-foot print box of photos and prints, and one map case drawer containing architects' plans of Sailor's Snug Harbor land and buildings.

The folders in each box are arranged alphabetically by type of material and chronologically within each category.

Box 1/7 contains materials from the 1800s, mostly articles from magazines such as Harper's (folders 1.1-1.16) and clippings (folders 1.21-1.24). There are also two copies of Mr. Randall's will (folders 1.29 and 1.30).

Box 2/7 starts the 19th century material and contains the same sort of subdivisions, concluding with transcripts of an interview with Captain Leo Kraszeski, administrator of the Harbor in 1972 (folders 2.22-2.26) and the Landmarks Preservation Commission reports on Sailors' Snug Harbor (folder 2.27).

Box 3/7 continues the 1900s material and contains notably Barnett Shepherd's book Sailor's Snug Harbor: 1801-1976 (folder 3.20) and various proposals made for future uses of the Harbor (folders 3.12-3.16).

Boxes 4/7 and 5/7 contain newspaper clippings arranged chronologically dating from 1900-1979.

Box 6/7 contains 5 videotapes made in 1972 and 1973 of interviews conducted at the Harbor under the auspices of SIIAS and the Dept. of Cultural Affairs, and a memorandum concerning the tapes (folder 6.6).

Box 7/7 contains the 5-volume Historic Structures Report on Snug Harbor prepared by David Gibson, Barnett Shepherd and Steven Bauer in 1974. It describes the historic buildings and suggests an architectural treatment for the entire site.

Print box 1/1 contains original photos used in Mr. Shepherd's publication (folders Pb1.1-Pb1.3, Pb1.10), other photos of the Harbor given by Harbor Trustees and Captain Kraszeski (folders Pb1.4 and Pb1.8), and pages from late 1800s and early 1900s newspapers with text and pictures of the Harbor and its inhabitants, the "Snugs."

The map case drawer (MC 1 drawer 9) contains a total of 14 oversize folders of the architects' plans and measured drawings of Sailors' Snug Harbor, including the Historic American Buildings Survey sheets (folder 9/13) and plans for the Snug Harbor Cultural Center (folder 13/31).

RELATED MATERIAL:

This collection is cross-referenced to 6. Architecture Survey Collection, 71. SIIAS Archives Collection, and 26.WT Davis Collection.

SAILORS' SNUG HARBOR

Box Inventories:

Box 1/7	Folders 1-30	Addresses, articles regarding Sailors' Snug Harbor	1800-1895
Box 2/7	Folders 1-22	Addresses, articles regarding Sailors' Snug Harbor	1905-1976
	23-28	Interviews with Captain Leo Kraszeski, last Master of the Harbor. Tapes and transcriptions	1972
Box 3/7	Folders 1-7	Maps, newsletters from the Harbor paint chips	1960-1979, n.d.
	11-16	Proposals re. the Harbor	1971-1979
	17-20	Manuscripts on the Harbor by Young Democrats of R.C., and Barnett Shepherd	1970-1976
	21-25	Snug Harbor Committee meeting notes	1973-1977
Box 4/7	Folders 1-20	Annotated clippings on the Harbor	1900-1972
Box 5/7	Folders 1-9	Annotated clippings on the Harbor	1973-1979
Box 6/7	Folders 1-6	Videotapes on the Harbor	1972-1974
Box 7/7	Folders 5 vols.	Historic Structures Report	1974
Print box 1	Folders 1-24	Photographs and prints of the Harbor	1879-1975
Map case I: 9		Maps, site plans, building plans, measured drawings of the Harbor	1930-1976