



"Old Snugs" in the Corridor Waiting for Dinner

THE SAILORS' SNUG HARBOR

RETREAT OF THE OLD SAILORS WHO HAVE BECOME DISABLED WHILE UNDER THE AMERICAN FLAG
By THOMAS WILSON



A.Y.H.



Church and Music Hall



The Hospital



Barracks Buildings



Statue to the Founder

A little way along the west shore of Staten Island, just beyond the New Brighton Railroad, stands a long row of buildings of marble and white stone, fronted by an expansive stretch of lawn and gravel walk, the whole fenced in by a tall iron railing extending about a quarter of a mile along the water front, which comprise the most unique institution in this country—the Sailors' Snug Harbor.

The Harbor is for the exclusive use of men who have sailed for not less than five years under the American flag and who are disabled, through age or otherwise, so they can no longer make a living on the sea.

The institution is unique not only because of this feature, but because it is immensely wealthy and yet it has never received a penny from anyone save its founder, who left it well provided for when he established it.

Robert R. Randall was a master mariner who had seen something of life afloat on each of the seven seas and he realized the average skipper had but little chance of accumulating anything while the average man before the mast had even less chance. In the last days of many of the men who followed the domain of Neptune for a livelihood Captain Randall saw much suffering and privation. That was more than 100 years ago, when wholesale philanthropy was practically unknown. There may have been aged men's homes for those who lived ashore, but for those who followed the sea there was nothing.

His situation made a deep impression on Captain Randall and when he felt that his days were almost spent he called to him Alexander Hamilton, the friend of Washington, and the first secretary of the United States, and explained

that he desired to establish what he left of his earthly goods a home for the benefit of disabled sailors of the American merchant marine.

The will was drawn June 1, 1801, and Captain Randall bequeathed practically his entire estate for the establishment and maintenance of a home for aged, decrepit and worn-out sailors, to be known as the Sailors' Snug Harbor. The instrument further provided that the trust should be committed to those who might from time to time occupy the following positions: Chancellor of the state of New York, the mayor of the city of New York, the recorder of the city of New York, the president of the Marine Society of the city of New York, the first vice president of the Marine Society of the city of New York, the rector of Trinity Church of the city of New York, and the minister of the First Presbyterian Church of the city of New York.

The estate that Captain Randall bequeathed comprised about 20 acres of land now roughly bounded by Fourth and Fifth avenues and Sixth and Tenth streets in New York city, and he stipulated that the trustees should hold the

property forever, using the revenue from it to establish and maintain the Harbor. While prohibiting the sale of the estate, there was nothing to prohibit the purchasing of more property.

Following the death of Captain Randall there was litigation and it was not until June, 1831, that the site for the Harbor was selected and 200 acres on Staten Island on the banks of the Kill von Kull were secured. The erection of a suitable building was begun at once, and the following year 50 sailors were admitted.

From then to the present time the number of buildings and the number of inmates have increased until now there are 48 structures and about 950 "Old Snugs" as they are known.

Since Captain Randall passed away there have been great changes in New York city, and the property that he last saw as a farm is now covered by scores of magnificent buildings in the heart of the metropolis and pays to the estate an annual income of about a million dollars.

The harbor is one of the most interesting places to visit for everywhere is the atmosphere of the sea. The men who are spending their last days there are im-

mensely proud of their home. On any clear day one may see gathered on the spacious lawns little groups of old men who may be playing a game of chess or checkers, gossiping or gathered around one, who, behind spectacles of extra power, is reading the news of the day or a story from a book.

Looking around among the groups of white-haired veterans on the lawns or lying ill and broken in the hospital or in their own little rooms, one will see on every face a tale of a life-long conflict with the sea; a conflict of two generations with the mighty deep; a conflict with death in many weird shapes; of escapes in which the life of the sailor hung by a mere thread.

To talk of death and danger to these "Old Snugs" is as talking of nothing for there is scarcely a man in the harbor who there is scarcely a man in the harbor who Spectre on many a cruise. There was Capt. George N. Armstrong, for instance. While in command of the bark Templar from San Francisco to Rio and other South American ports with silver, his vessel was attacked by pirates in the harbor of Rio. With a pistol in either hand

he stood them off while his crew looked on. At the crucial moment his eldest daughter, pale but calm, went to him and laid her head on his shoulder. This aroused the manly instinct in the breasts of his crew and they beat the pirates off.

On the voyage back from Rio yellow fever broke out. In three days his wife and one daughter, and half of his crew succumbed, but the brave skipper, aided by his other daughter and a couple of men worked the ship until he was taken ill. Then the mate was stricken and the fate of the vessel and those on board was left to the daughter who heroically did her part, alternately nursing the men and steering the ship till a passing vessel gave help.

While in command of the bark Osceola, trading between San Francisco and China, the vessel was caught in a simoon and driven on a rock near one of the thousand little islands in the South Pacific. The crew took to the boats but Captain Armstrong stuck to the ship. When she broke up he got clear of the wreckage in a small skiff with neither rudder or oars. Fate guided the little craft to an island.

The island was indeed a welcome bit terra firma for it meant safety and life, but at an awful price.

"I covered the island from one end to the other," said the Captain, "and it was about three by five miles, but there was no sign of habitation and the truth dawned upon me. I was on a piece of land with nothing save the clothes which I stood and with no fellow-crews within 20 miles. I was far out of course of any vessel and my chances of being taken off were as one in a million."

"The desire of life was strong in me, determined to live. I ate I did, and six months' my daily diet was bird's nest and dead fish cast up by the ocean. Light of dawn saw me standing on the beach peering across the water for a vessel while the close of day saw me on my knees praying for deliverance."

"In the meantime a vessel which had been sent to find me was on its way when the crew took me off I was in a jabber that was no language."

But even this adventure did not save Captain Armstrong from the sea.

It is the first time that he and death had been companions in a lonely vigil, for when his ship, the Lucille, went to pieces in the storm off Cape Cod he clung to a spar and floated around for 70 hours before he was picked up.

Practically every man in the harbor can tell a similar story and were all the tales gathered and set down there would be a volume more replete with adventure than any story ever imagined by the most versatile of authors.

Yet here are these men who have sailed upon every sea, often meeting death face to face, yet escaping his clutches, gathered from all quarters of the globe to pass their remaining days upon dry land and all the comforts denied them in their early days.

Expense has not been spared to make the Harbor not only a haven of rest, but a place of mental enjoyment. One of the large buildings is a beautiful chapel where every Sabbath the old men gather to hear the Gospel and a sermon by some well-known "sky pilot." Another building is a theatre, not merely a building converted to that use, but a playhouse especially having all the accessories that a first-class house of amusement should have. At least once a week a theatrical party is brought from New York and the "Old Snugs" are treated to a performance.

The building is a library where all the literature of the day, newspapers, books and books may be obtained. The building is the hospital where the men are as tenderly cared for as they can be in their own homes.

THE MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION

At the meeting of the Ministerial Association yesterday morning, the following arrangements were made for union services during the Week of Prayer:

Monday evening, January 4th.—Grace Church, leader, Rev. T. F. Fullerton; subject, God's Faithfulness and Man's Responsibility.

Tuesday evening, January 5th.—Baptist Church, leader, Rev. D. McLean; subject, Missions.

Wednesday evening, January 6th.—Christian Church, leader, Rev. Geo. E. Ross; People's Church, leader, Rev. G. R. White, subject, Family and Schools.

Thursday evening, January 7th.—First Methodist Church, subject, British and Foreign Bible Society, address by Rev. Wm. Harrison and Rev. R. G. Strathe.

Friday evening, January 8th.—Zion Church, leader, Rev. H. E. Thomas; subject, Gambling and Intemperance.

Saturday evening, January 9th.—St. James' Church, leader, Rev. F. J. Floyd; subject, The Signs of the Times.

All these services will begin promptly at 7.30 and close at 9 o'clock. An offering will be received at each service and devoted to the P. E. Island Hospital less necessary expenses of Ministerial Association.

On Sunday, January 10th, the usual exchange of pulpits will be made in the morning as follows:—Grace Church—Rev. G. R. White. Baptist Church—Rev. William Harrison. First Methodist—Rev. Geo. E. Ross. Zion Church—Rev. H. E. Thomas. St. James Church—Rev. F. J. Floyd. Christian Church—Rev. T. F. Fullerton.

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