"ROCKS AND STORMS I'LL FEAR NO MORE":

ANGLO-AMERICAN MARITIME MEMORIALIZATION, 1700 - 1940

A Dissertation

by

DAVID JAMES STEWART

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2004

Major Subject: Anthropology

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ABSTRACT

"Rocks and Storms I'll Fear No More":

Anglo-American Maritime Memorialization, 1700 - 1940. (May 2004)

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Nautical archaeology has made remarkable advances since its inception half a century ago, but one area in need of more attention is the examination of cultural aspects of seafaring. This dissertation advances understanding of eighteenth- through early-twentieth century British and American maritime culture by exploring traditional memorialization practices. Interpretations are based primarily on analysis of 412 maritime memorials recorded during two archaeological surveys in Great Britain and the United States. In addition, primary accounts from the Age of Sail are utilized to place maritime memorialization into its proper cultural and historical context.

Research reveals three major themes in Anglo-American maritime memorialization. First, memorials show a striking concern for the dangers and hardships of life at sea. Numerous memorials describe the perils of the natural world and the group values that mariners developed to cope with the ever-present possibility of sudden death. Such values include attention to duty, courage, group loyalty, self-sacrifice, and pride.

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Second, maritime communities faced the problem of commemorating those who never returned from the sea. Many sailors were lost at sea or died aboard ship or in distant lands. In the vast majority of such cases, the body was never returned home, and many did not receive proper burial. As a result, family members and fellow sailors created memorials to honor the lost and to symbolically lay the deceased to rest. Evidence indicates, however, that such attempts were not entirely satisfactory. Many epitaphs lament the fact that empty graves cannot provide an adequate substitute for missing bodies.

Finally, investigation revealed a significant increase in religious sentiment on maritime memorials from the mid-nineteenth century until the end of the Age of Sail. It is suggested that the increase in maritime religious sentiment was linked to nineteenth-century religious reform movements. The prevalence of religious imagery and inscriptions on maritime memorials during this time, however, probably does not indicate that most sailors became religious. Rather, most religious maritime memorials were erected by sailors' families. This suggests that maritime families turned to religion as a source of comfort when faced with the deaths of loved ones at sea.

For Heidi

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You do not travel, but your mind does

You are here, but the other you isn't.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The *Andacollo*

On a spring day in 1865, the ship *Andacollo* of Liverpool weighed anchor and departed Callao, Peru, under the command of Wilfred Gilberry, her 40-year old captain. The vessel was bound for Valparaiso, Chile, en route home to Liverpool. As it made its way down the coast of South America, the *Andacollo* sailed out of history. The ship never arrived at Valparaiso, nor did it ever return to its home port in the British Isles. It simply vanished at sea, as did many other vessels during the Age of Sail (the fifteenth through the early twentieth centuries). It is possible that the *Andacollo* foundered in a storm, or was shipwrecked on the rocky coast. The crew might have survived for a time, or been plunged instantly to a watery grave. No one will ever know.

Danger and Death in Seafaring

Although the fate of the *Andacollo* will never be known, its loss illustrates the dangers faced by mariners in the Age of Sail. For sailors, death was an ever-present fact of life. This section describes some of the main causes of death among mariners during this period.

This dissertation follows the format of the *Journal of American Folklore*.

The Natural World

Storms were frequent occurrences at sea, and all mariners and vessels could expect to face many over the course of a career. As noted by Lavery (1989: 190), ships were designed to weather the elements, and few losses were caused solely by storms. The chief danger of storms lay in their ability to drive ships onto land. Sailing ships were subject to the effects of winds, tides, and currents to a far greater degree than modern powered vessels. Because of this, one of the greatest fears of sailors was being on a "lee shore," a condition where winds blew from the sea onto the land. To be trapped against a lee shore in a rising gale was a recipe for disaster. Seaman Edward Coxere, who served in the English Navy in the seventeenth century, described just such a situation on the coast of North Africa:

> We suddenly saw the land on the weather bow, a sad sight with the sea raging on the rocks at one side and it falling so violently on us on the other side, which was such a dismal sight to us as is hard to be expressed the manner of it, so violently did the sea press us towards the shore, insomuch that we were forced to let run our yards and sails down and cut away our mainmast and hove yards and sails overaboard and put overboard one anchor. We finding the sea heaving us still to the shore, we put over another anchor and, finding the wind and sea still press us to the shore and but little more drift, we cut overboard our foremast and put over another anchor, which was the last we had to trust to. (Coxere 1946: 55-56)

Fortunately for Coxere, the last anchor held and disaster was averted. Many other ships, however, were not so lucky, ending up as broken timbers scattered along rocky coastlines. While a few lucky seamen might make it ashore alive, the majority were typically dashed to death on the rocks or drowned in the raging storm waters.

Lee shores may have been the most deadly places for sailing vessels to be during storms, but gales at sea could also be deadly. A sudden squall could send a ship

to the bottom with little or no warning. Storms could also lay a ship "on its beam ends"

(i.e., turned on its side so that its decks were perpendicular to the surface of the sea). In

such a position, the ship was virtually unmanageable, and if steps were not taken to

right the vessel quickly, it could fill with water and founder. Such a fate befell two

American topsail schooners, *Hamilton* and *Scourge*, on Lake Ontario one night in

August 1813. Awakening to the feel of raindrops on his face, sailor Ned Myers of

Scourge decided to go below for a bottle of liquor that he and a shipmate had

clandestinely stowed in their mess chest. Myers had just reached the companion ladder

"when a flash of lightning almost blinded me. The thunder came at the next instant,

and with it a rushing of winds that fairly smothered the clap" (Myers and Cooper 1989:

81). Within a minute, the sudden squall had laid the vessel on its side, creating a scene

of chaos:

> The flashes of lightning were incessant, and nearly blinded me. Our decks
> seemed on fire, and yet I could see nothing. I heard no hail, no order, no call;
> but the schooner was filled with the shrieks and cries of the men to leeward,
> who were lying jammed under the guns, shot-boxes, shot, and other heavy
> things that had gone down as the vessel fell over. The starboard second gun,
> from forward, had capsized, and come down directly over the forward hatch,
> and I caught a glimpse of a man struggling to get past it. (Myers and Cooper
> 1989: 82)

Within the space of a few minutes, *Scourge* filled with water and sank. Myers

was among the lucky few who survived the disaster: as he swam blindly away from the

sunken vessel, he came by chance upon the ship's boat and managed to heave himself

aboard. Fifty-three other seamen from *Hamilton* and *Scourge* were not so fortunate.

When the wrecks were discovered in the 1970s, underwater surveys revealed that the

bones of many of the ill-fated sailors still lie scattered around the hulls 300 feet (91 m)

below the surface (Cassavoy and Crisman 1988: 176). On warships, being laid on the beam ends was especially dangerous because it could cause cannon to break loose and plunge through the opposite side (Lavery 1989: 190). Although Myers's account states that the second cannon on the *Scourge*'s starboard side broke free, photographs reveal that all of the guns are still in their original positions (Cassavoy and Crisman 1988: 176). In this case, it appears that the passage of time embellished the events of the night in Myers's memory. Nevertheless, his account of the sinking of the *Scourge* still provides a vivid description of the pandemonium that occurred when a ship was blown onto its side.

Storms could drive a ship ashore, but the land was dangerous for vessels even when the weather was good. Before the advent of modern navigational equipment and charts, ships cruising along the coast had to keep a sharp watch out for rocks and reefs. The danger was exacerbated when a ship was entering or leaving port. Muckelroy (1978: 150) notes the similarity between the dangers to vessels near harbors and the hazards to modern aircraft during takeoff and landing. The most dangerous time for an airplane is when it is in close proximity to the ground, taking off or landing. By the same token, when sailing vessels were entering or departing port, dangers that could destroy a ship in seconds were always close at hand. Careful attention had to be paid to preventing the ship from running aground.

Disease

It seems likely that more sailors were killed by disease than any other cause during the Age of Sail. According to Lewis (1960: 420), sickness accounted for about half of all deaths in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars. McKee's study of the early U.S. Navy shows that around a third of all naval officer deaths were due to illness (McKee 1991: 410). Lloyd (1968: 258-264) cites illness as the primary killer of seamen and describes the three worst diseases that plagued sailors, which he terms the "three killers in the Georgian navy." The first was scurvy, a disease caused by vitamin C deficiency, which became a scourge to sailors with the advent of global seafaring in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Scurvy was easily preventable by providing fresh food, especially citrus juice. This fact was known among mariners by the first half of the seventeenth century, as evidenced by the publication of John Smith's *Seaman's Grammar* in 1627 (Lloyd 1968: 62-63). In addition to asking for better provisions to improve the health of sailors in general, Smith specifically stated that lemon juice should be carried to prevent scurvy. However, navies and merchant services were slow to supply citrus juice due to financial considerations. In addition, it was impossible to keep a supply of fresh produce on hand during extended sea voyages. Scurvy therefore remained a problem until the nineteenth century.

Once scurvy had been largely eliminated from ships in the early 1800s, naval surgeons began to notice a similar disease. Beriberi, a disease caused by vitamin B deficiency, had often gone undiagnosed before the nineteenth century due to the fact that its symptoms resembled those of scurvy (Friedenberg 2002: 66). Even after being

recognized by mariners, beriberi remained a problem until the late 1800s, largely due to the mystery surrounding the actual cause of the disease. It was noted, however, that beriberi usually occurred in Southeast Asia or on ships returning from those waters. Maritime surgeons finally deduced that beriberi usually struck ship's crews that were fed exclusively on rice, which lacks sufficient vitamin B. Adding wheat and other fresh foods to the diet was found to eliminate the threat of beriberi (Friedenberg 2002: 72-74).

The second of Lloyd's great maritime killers was typhus, known to seamen as "ship fever" (Lloyd 1968: 64-65). Typhus was spread by a louse that lived in dirty conditions, especially filthy clothing and bedding. In the early days of global seafaring, little attention was paid to keeping vessels clean. Most men slept on the decks, and bedding soon became filthy and infested. Also, there was no standard uniform for sailors. When a sailor signed aboard a merchant ship or was pressed into a naval vessel, he came aboard dressed in whatever clothes he possessed. In the cramped conditions aboard ship, a seaman infected with typhus could easily spread it to the entire community (Lloyd 1968: 65). Preventing typhus was a matter of maintaining a clean ship. Hammocks made their appearance in English naval vessels in the late 1500s, and became standard issue during the seventeenth century (Lloyd 1968: 68). With hammocks, it was no longer necessary for sailors to sleep on damp or filthy decks, so sanitation improved. Captains also began employing other measures to keep ships clean. The practice of scrubbing the decks every morning became a maritime tradition. In addition, ships were fumigated periodically to kill rats and insects. Such

measures helped alleviate the problems of pests and disease aboard vessels, but never entirely prevented them.

In addition to diseases such as scurvy or typhus that occurred aboard ship, sailors were also in danger of taking ill when in port. When ashore, many sailors frequented prostitutes, and complaints of venereal disease were common among sailors returning from shore leave. Although treatments for venereal disease existed, many sailors did not seek them because it was customary for their wages to be docked to pay for the treatment (Friedenberg 2002: 37). As they began to explore the world, Europeans discovered that they had no immunity to a variety of exotic diseases. Sailors, in the vanguard of exploration and discovery, were especially hard hit by foreign diseases. In particular, hot, humid, tropical climates proved deadly for Europeans. The third of Lloyd's great maritime killers was yellow fever, a mosquito-borne disease endemic to tropical climates. The "yellow jack" or "black vomit," as it was variously called by sailors, was rife in West Africa and the West Indies, both of which were heavily engaged in seaborne trade. The slave ports of the West African coast were so deadly that a rhyme regarding them entered maritime folklore (Rediker 1987: 47):

> Beware and take care
> Of the Bight of Benin;
> For one that comes out,
> There are forty go in.

While the rhyme may exaggerate the casualty rate along that coast, there is no doubt that mariners feared it greatly. A similar situation existed in the Caribbean. In his memoirs, Commander James Anthony Gardner of the Royal Navy described his

experiences with yellow jack in the Caribbean in 1801. At Port Royal, Jamaica,

Gardner dined with friends aboard HMS *Elephant*, in celebration of that ship being

ordered to return to England. Gardner's friends were joyous at the prospect of leaving

the disease-ridden Caribbean, but unfortunately not all of them made it: "Poor fellows,

little did they think that instead of going home their bones would be left at the

Palisades. I am grieved to say that out of the whole mess only two or three returned"

(Gardner 1955: 173). Soon, the fever made its appearance aboard Gardner's ship, HMS

Brunswick, as well. Within days "the *Brunswick* had 287 men on the sick list, and

buried a great many" (Gardner 1955: 171). The situation was so bad that the vessel

was rendered unfit for service: "On our sick list being shown to the admiral he seemed

astonished at the number, and when he found it was so swelled with yellow fever

patients he ordered our boat off immediately and would not suffer any communication

with our ship" (Gardner 1955: 173). The admiral's actions make it clear that he

understood the highly contagious nature of the disease and feared for the safety of the

entire British fleet.

Accidents

Among the causes of accidental death, drownings rank among the most

prominent in the historical literature. Although they made their living upon the sea,

many seamen during the Age of Sail did not know how to swim. Lavery (1989: 189)

states that sailors were not encouraged to learn the skill because officers feared that it

would aid in desertion. Whatever the reason, the lack of swimming ability often meant

that sailors drowned in highly preventable accidents. At sea, being swept overboard from a heaving deck was a very real job hazard, especially during rough weather. Another situation where the risk of drowning was high occurred during small boat operations. Small craft were commonly employed to transport goods and people between anchored vessels and the shore. Such voyages could be dangerous in heavy seas, or along shores where the boats had to make their way through the surf. McKee (1991: 402) noted that about half of all accidental drownings among U.S. naval officers occurred during small boat operations.

Falling from aloft while working in the rigging was a common accident, mentioned in many accounts from the Age of Sail. A sailing ship was a dangerous place, especially for newcomers. Sailing rigs consisted of complex systems of masts, spars, ropes, and tackle. It was easy to lose one's concentration and fall from aloft. Doing so had two possible outcomes, either one undesirable: plunging into the sea or crashing onto the deck. If a man fell into the sea, he usually drowned before help could arrive. The description of such an event by Richard Henry Dana, Jr., who went to sea aboard an American brig in 1834, is typical of many such stories:

> [The sailor] was going aloft to fit a strap round the main top-mast-head, for ringtail halyards, and had the strap and block, a coil of halyards, and a marline-spike about his neck. He fell from the starboard futtock shrouds, and not knowing how to swim, and being heavily dressed, with all those things round his neck, he probably sank immediately. (Dana 1986: 28)

A boat was quickly launched, but no trace of the man was found. At least those sailors who fell into the sea had some hope of treading water and being picked up. A

fall onto the deck, however, was almost always fatal (Lavery 1989: 189). Even if a man survived, he was likely to be maimed for life.

Deaths in Action

According to the available statistics, deaths in action accounted for only a small percentage of maritime casualties, even during wartime. Lewis (1960: 421, 442) estimated that only 6.3% of British naval deaths during the Napoleonic Wars were a result of combat. McKee's study of the U.S. naval officer corps rates the danger somewhat higher. McKee found that 20% of officer deaths were combat related. Although this number is higher than Lewis's, it is still smaller than deaths due to illness or the natural dangers of the sea. Despite the small numbers, however, being killed in action was one of the most horrific ways to die during the Age of Sail. The weapons used during this period were extremely brutal. Cannon shot, meant to crash through wooden planking or disable rigging, could tear a man to pieces. Grapeshot and cannister shot were also fired from cannons. These consisted of iron or lead balls that could sweep the decks of enemy vessels, killing or wounding many with one shot. Perhaps the worst danger from cannon, however, came from splinters. A cannon ball striking the side of a wooden vessel with enough force could tear through the frames and planking, filling the air with hundreds of jagged fragments.

Personal weapons were equally deadly. Muskets and pistols, although crude by modern standards, were deadly at close range. In combat sharpshooters would be posted in the fighting tops to snipe at enemy officers and sailors. The deadly

effectiveness of this tactic is perhaps best illustrated by the fate of the British Admiral

Horatio Nelson. While in command of the British fleet at the Battle of Trafalgar,

Nelson was felled by a shot from a sharpshooter aboard the French ship *Redoubtable*

(Pocock 1994: 328). Nelson was not killed instantly, but the musket ball lodged in his

body. Taken below decks, he succumbed some three hours after being wounded.

Many other sailors met a similar fate in combat. Even when not killed outright, the

gaping wounds caused by the weaponry of the period were beyond the skill of most

surgeons. Lacking adequate medical care, many sailors died of wounds or from

infection.

Maritime Mortality Rates

As discussed in the preceding section, life at sea presented many dangers to

mariners. Rediker (1987: 92-93) notes, however, that it is extremely difficult to arrive

at reliable statistics concerning maritime mortality rates during this period. Several

estimates provide an idea of the degree of danger faced by sailors during this period.

Hohman (1928: 316) examined the account books for fifteen voyages made by eight

mid-nineteenth century American whaling vessels. He determined that sixteen deaths

occurred among the 489 crewmen, a mortality rate of only 3.3%. A further study by

Hohman (1928: 317) of twenty-three voyages by ten whaling vessels revealed a death

rate of only 2.6% (30 out of 1,141 total whalemen). Hohman's studies indicate a

relatively low mortality rate among American whalemen, a conclusion supported by

Creighton's (1985) study of over 100 diaries of American merchant seamen and

whalers from 1830 to 1870. Creighton (1985: 15-16) calculated that the average

American merchant vessel or whaler suffered a mortality rate of approximately 5%

over the course of three years at sea.

While the data on mortality rates on civilian vessels seems relatively low, the

evidence from naval vessels is mixed. In 1810, while engaged in the Napoleonic Wars,

the British Royal Navy suffered a total loss of 5,183 sailors (Lewis 1960: 419). This

figure represents a mortality rate of 3.6%, based on Lloyd's (1968: 289) figure of

142,098 men serving in the navy that year. This estimate for the Royal Navy is

consistent with those for the whaling ships described above, but differs substantially

from a study of the United States Navy by McKee (1991: 397-411 and Table 40, page

498). McKee determined that about 20% of all of the officers in the U.S. Navy died

between 1797 and the end of the War of 1812. McKee's study, however, is based only

on officers, whereas the others mentioned above considered both officers and sailors.

The discrepancy between McKee's study and the others may indicate that officers died

at higher rates than sailors.

While the scant data available seems to indicate that overall mortality rates

were not especially high among sailors, there is no doubt that seafaring was a

dangerous profession. The studies by Hohman and Creighton are based on accounts

and diaries that exist because those vessels completed their voyages. In the case of

vessels that were shipwrecked or that simply vanished at sea, such as the *Andacollo*,

logs and diaries disappeared along with the ill-fated ships and crews. Although the

total number of ships lost was relatively small compared to the number in service in

any given year, shipwrecks and founderings represented catastrophic events that resulted in large loss of life. In addition, the total loss of a vessel captured the imagination of mariners and the public alike. Spectacular events such as shipwrecks, which could result in hundreds of deaths on a single day, underscored the perils of the sea in the minds of sailors. Although it is likely that such events killed relatively few sailors per year, their spectacular nature made them a source of constant fear among mariners.

The tragic nature of death at sea represents the key to understanding the hold that death had on the maritime mind. It would do no good to tell a jack tar that *statistically* he was in little danger. He had known far too many friends who had sailed over the horizon and never been seen again, or caught the Yellow Jack in the West Indies, or been swept overboard during a two-reef topsail gale rounding the Horn. In fo'c'sles and taverns, mariners swapped yarns and sang ballads about those lost at sea. Any reading of accounts from the period shows that the spectre of death was a constant part of maritime life. Storms, shipwrecks, sicknesses, and those who succumbed to them formed major themes within maritime writing from the Age of Sail.

The Study of Maritime Life

Scholars have examined maritime life from a variety of angles. The landmark study "Jack Tar in the Streets" by Jesse Lemisch (1968) represented an early call for maritime historians to study the lives of all maritime peoples. Following Lemisch's lead, maritime and naval historians have examined topics such as shipboard life, the

social history of maritime societies, and the history of particular regions. Recent historical studies have dealt with subjects that had been overlooked by previous scholarship, including black sailors (Bolster 1997) and female mariners (Cordingly 2001; Creighton and Norling 1996; Norling 2000; Stark 1996). Vickers (1993) has reiterated Lemisch's challenge and pointed out additional topics for historical research into maritime life. In particular, Vickers argues that maritime historians need to better integrate study of life at sea with examination of life in maritime communities.

Like maritime historians, nautical archaeologists have also begun to devote more attention to the study of maritime life. In the early days of nautical archaeology, much research was devoted to particular shipwreck sites, the history of shipbuilding, and long-distance trade. With half a century of shipwreck excavations completed, nautical archaeologists are now turning to broader anthropological questions. Beginning with the pioneering work of Muckelroy (1978), nautical archaeologists are now devoting more time to the study of seafaring life and culture (e.g., Gould 2000; Green 1990). Recent research integrates the study of shipwrecks into the *maritime cultural landscape*, defined as all of the evidence of seafaring culture both on sea and ashore (Westerdahl 1992). Studies dealing with the maritime cultural landscape have been conducted in Scandinavia (Hasslöf 1972; Westerdahl 1992) and England (Parker 1999). All of these studies have contributed much to our understanding of maritime culture in the Age of Sail. However, other approaches to the study of maritime life in this period have not yet been utilized.

Concepts from anthropology and folklore can contribute much to our understanding of maritime life during the Age of Sail. Within anthropology, a specialized area known as the *anthropology of work* examines cultural aspects of the workplace. Work is viewed as a fundamental part of human existence that can be studied to learn about social processes. Scholars interested in the anthropology of work have studied topics such as the meaning of work in different cultures, the transmission of job-related knowledge from worker to worker, power relations between employees and management, and the ways in which people construct and maintain workplace society (Coy 1989; Gamst 1995; Krinhop 1999). Perspectives from the anthropology of work should prove useful for helping to understand how sailors constructed culture within their unique workplace environment.

Similar to studies of the anthropology of work is folkloristic research into *folk groups*. Folk groups refer to distinct social units that maintain a shared body of tradition that is transmitted informally from member to member. Members of the folk group share a great deal of knowledge that is not understood by outsiders, and conduct themselves according to a set of customs and beliefs that are known primarily by members of the group. Some folk groups are based on religion or ethnicity, while others are composed of members of particular occupations. In the latter category, scholars have noted that folk groups often form in occupations that have a high degree of risk and danger, such as firefighters (McCarl 1985, 1986), miners (Korson 1960), and loggers (Toelken 1996).

Sailors, and inhabitants of associated maritime communities ashore, represent an occupational folk group. The skills possessed by mariners, and the dangerous environment in which they work, helped create a shared body of tradition unique to maritime peoples. While numerous collections of nautical lore from the age of sail have been published, most folkloristic studies of maritime communities have dealt with modern groups. Folklorists have yet to apply the folk group approach to the study of past maritime peoples. Part of the reason for this is the problem of trying to record shared traditions from people who are long since dead. The solution to this problem is to combine theoretical concepts from folk group research and the anthropology of work with methodologies from archaeology and history.

The *Andacollo*, Revisited

Memorialization practices represent one category of shared tradition that can be studied through archaeological and historical research. The story of the loss of the *Andacollo*, for example, remains today on a gravestone in St. James's Cemetery, Liverpool, England. The gravestone is no longer *in situ*, and is so badly weathered that one must kneel in front and examine it carefully in order to learn the story of loss that it contains (Figure 1). The full inscription reads:

<div align="center">

IN SACRED REMEMBRANCE
OF
WILFRED MOSSOP,
Master Mariner of this Port.
Born at Whitehaven December 7th, 1786
Departed this life December 12th, 1848
"Therefore be ye also ready."
HANNAH, his Daughter,

</div>

Died at Whitehaven December 31st 1854
Aged 23 Years
WILFRED GILBERRY,
his Nephew: Born 17th April 1825:
left Callao 30th May 1865, in command of
the ship "Andacollo" bound for Valparaiso
and has never since been heard of.

ISABELLA GILBERRY,
Wife of the above,
departed this life December 11th 1883
Aged 56 Years

Figure 1. Mossop/Gilberry family gravestone, recording the loss of Wilfred Gilberry in the *Andacollo*. MR# 132, St. James's Cemetery, Liverpool.

Although they knew that his body would never rest in the grave, Gilberry's family nevertheless felt it necessary to add his story to the family gravestone. Hundreds of similar memorials exist in churchyards and cemeteries throughout Great Britain and the United States.

Such memorials provide an unexamined window into the values and worldview of the maritime folk group. The potential for memorials to provide information concerning cultural values has been recognized since the 1960s. The classic studies of New England tombstones by James Deetz and Edwin Dethlefsen (Dethlefsen and Deetz 1966; Deetz 1977; Dethlefsen 1981) dealt mainly with understanding religious change in New England based on the evolution of gravestone symbolism. Dethlefsen and Deetz (1966: 502) also recognized, however, that gravestones could yield insight into the values of a society. Since their groundbreaking studies, many other scholars have examined the ways in which memorials reflect the values of particular cultural groups (see Meyer 1992 for examples and bibliography). The current scholarly attitude toward gravestone studies is best summed-up by Sarah Tarlow (1999: 35): "If certain emotions correspond with the values of a society - grief at death, fear of ancestors, love of country, for example - then they will be created and recreated through, amongst other things, material practice." The maritime folk group, like other subcultures, used memorials and mortuary rituals to create their conception of the world. To date, however, no study of maritime memorials as indicators of maritime values and worldview has been conducted.

This dissertation seeks to further the understanding of eighteenth- through early twentieth-century British and American maritime culture through an examination of traditional memorialization practices. The primary data set consists of 412 maritime memorials from England and the northeastern United States that were recorded during two archaeological surveys in the summer of 2002. Other sources of evidence are also considered. Maritime peoples from the Age of Sail left behind written descriptions of burials at sea, accounts of memorial services in maritime chapels, and poems and songs commemorating the dead. Taken together, these sources provide a wealth of material rich in symbolism and meaning. While studying death to understand life might at first seem contradictory, it is by no means so. As death is a basic fact of life, the rituals and artifacts associated with death reveal a great deal about the worldview and values of the group that produced them.

Chapter 2 provides a review of scholarly literature dealing with death and memorialization. The ways in which Anglo-American mariners fit the theoretical concept of a folk group forms the subject of chapter 3. The next two chapters describe the 2002 Maritime Memorials Survey and provide an overview of the data. From this, four main themes in maritime memorialization are identified, each of which is explored in a separate chapter. Chapter 6, "Rocks and Storms: The Perils of Maritime Life and the Development of Maritime Worldview" describes the ways in which fear of death from both natural and manmade forces was expressed in the memorials, and illustrates the values that sailors developed to deal with the ever-present possibility of death. Chapter 7, "Burial at Sea as Ritual Performance," demonstrates how the ritual of burial

at sea was used to separate the dead from the living and re-create the social order that had been disrupted by death. The ways in which sailors and maritime communities dealt with the loss of so many of their comrades at sea and in far corners of the world are discussed in chapter 8, "'Was Never Since Heard Of': Memorializing the Absent Body." The survey revealed a significant increase in religious sentiment on mid-nineteenth century maritime memorials, in the form of both religious inscriptions linking seafarers to God and symbolism involving the association of Jesus Christ with the anchor. This development forms the basis for the final interpretive chapter, "The Anchor and the Cross." Finally, chapter 10 provides a discussion of the main arguments, compares memorialization in the Age of Sail with contemporary maritime memorialization practices, and outlines some suggestions for further research into maritime life.

Spatial and Chronological Framework

This study will examine and compare eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English and American maritime memorialization practices. These groups were chosen because they each represent maritime cultures with well-developed bodies of shared tradition. English and American seafarers also shared much tradition in common, so it will be interesting to see how much of this shared tradition was expressed in memorials. In addition, both English and American seafarers have been the subject of numerous scholarly studies (e.g., Bauer 1988; Creighton 1982; Duffy 1992; Kemp 1970; Lloyd 1968; Rediker 1987; Rodger 1996). As such, both societies should

provide ample data concerning memorialization practices. Understanding the

memorialization practices will provide information concerning the worldview and

values of the maritime folk group as a whole. In turn, this may lead to a better

understanding of the lives of other maritime peoples in the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries.

Note on Terminology

Throughout the text, memorials recorded by the survey are referred to by MR#

(Memorial Record #).

CHAPTER II

THE STUDY OF DEATH AND MEMORIALIZATION:

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Death is a basic fact of human existence. Early on, we realize that death is all around us. Before reaching maturity, all humans come to the awareness that death is a fundamental part of human life, yet one that is accompanied by anxiety, sadness, and fear. Given the intense emotions it arouses, it is not surprising that death is one of the most intensively studied subjects in the world. Scholars have studied death from many viewpoints, resulting in a huge body of literature. Philosophers and religious scholars meditate upon the meaning of death and contemplate the existence of an afterlife (Cox 1992; Kauffman 1995). Physical anthropologists study skeletal remains to unlock the mysteries of human evolution (Klein 1989; Wolpoff 1999), examine the effects of diseases in past populations (Cohen & Armelagos 1984; Aufderheide et al. 1998) and solve modern crimes (Manhein 1999; Steadman 2002), among other things. Psychologists study responses to death in order to counsel terminally ill patients or help survivors deal with the deaths of loved ones (Becvar 2001; Parkes 2001; Sutcliffe 1998). All of these disciplines offer valuable contributions to the study of death, but are beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Within death studies, three approaches are most useful for examining death and memorialization within the maritime folk group. First, studies of changes in attitudes toward death over time provide a historical framework within which to fit the examination of maritime memorialization. Second, the study of the rituals associated

with death and memorialization can reveal much about values, belief systems, and worldview. The third approach utilizes the material culture of death and memorialization to yield insights into cultural beliefs. These approaches have primarily been the focus of work by historians, anthropologists, folklorists, and archaeologists. An examination of the literature of these three vectors illustrates theories and methods that will prove useful for studying death and memorialization among maritime peoples.

A Historical Framework for the Study of Death

The funerary practices utilized by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Anglo-American maritime peoples had their roots in much older traditions. Historians have provided many notable studies detailing changes in death practices and attitudes toward death since the Medieval period. In England, much scholarship has been devoted to examining the changes in beliefs regarding death during the transition from the Medieval to the modern world. Debate centers around the impact of the Protestant Reformation. Prior to the Reformation, Catholic doctrine held that most souls experienced an extensive period in purgatory before entering heaven. It was the obligation of living friends and relatives to ease the suffering of loved ones in purgatory through prayer, by providing charity to the poor, or by purchasing masses from the Church. The most significant change in belief brought about by the Reformation was the elimination of the concept of purgatory. Reformation doctrine maintained that upon death souls immediately went straight to heaven or hell.

Although the effects of this change in doctrine are still being studied, most scholars agree on several broad points (Houlbrooke 1998; Gittings 1999: 152-154; Morgan 2000: 141-142). Since there was no in-between state, there was no way to assist the souls of departed loved ones. Rather than paying for masses to help souls in purgatory, efforts focused on remembering the deceased. There was an increase in the erection of memorials after the Reformation. The idea that each person deserved his or her own grave, which would remain theirs for all time to come, has also been linked to the changes in beliefs following the Reformation (Tarlow 1998; 1999: 114). Funerals were simplified in accordance with Protestant beliefs that forbade excessive ostentation. The funeral came to be seen as an outlet for the grief of the deceased's family rather than as a way to help the soul transition through purgatory. Nevertheless, opinion remains divided concerning how long it took for Protestant ideas to become dominant and the degree to which new beliefs took hold among the mass of the population. It appears that the Reformation was a lengthy process rather than a single event, and that some areas of England, particularly those removed from the centers of state and religious power, continued to practice some Catholic rites and older folk traditions well into the seventeenth century.

Historians have also examined the rise of the concept of individualism during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In Western Europe during this time there was growing recognition of the importance and value of individuals. Such concerns resulted in the formulation of beliefs regarding individual rights and formed the underpinnings of the philosophy that led to the American and French revolutions.

Gittings (1984) discusses the ways in which the rise of individualism was reflected in mortuary practices. Until the end of the 1600s, most people were buried in unmarked graves. During the eighteenth century, however, the number of memorials increased. Gittings sees this as a material culture manifestation of the rise in the importance of individuals. Each person was viewed as unique, and new beliefs held that everyone should have a permanent burial place marked out for them for all time. This theme has recently been reiterated by Tarlow (1999), although she dates the increase in permanent memorials to the end of the eighteenth century. Houlbrooke (1998: 2-3) cautions that individualism is a difficult concept to define, let alone interpret in the historical record. Nonetheless, he agrees with Gittings and Tarlow that the rise of individualism played a role in the increase in the number of memorials during the eighteenth century.

Many scholars have attempted to explain the lavish funerals and mourning practices of the nineteenth century in both England and America. Curl (2000) and Morley (1971) examine funerary practices of English Victorians, which exemplified the concept of lavish funerals. While the focus on nineteenth-century funerals has been on the elaborate Victorian funerals, it is important to remember that such lavish displays were largely confined to the wealthy. Saum (1975) provides a useful corrective to this by investigating the funerals of common people in early nineteenth-century America. Saum argues that death was an ever-present phenomenon in the lives of nineteenth-century Americans, so that the average person of that time thought about death much more than the average person does today. Despite the widespread belief that death could be a joyful occasion because it resulted in the soul's return to heaven,

Saum (1975: 46) found very few references to the happiness to be experienced in heaven. Instead, death was seen as a release from suffering. Saum's work demonstrates that one must look beyond the lavish funerals and monuments of the nineteenth century when attempting to understand the core beliefs of the masses of people.

Studies of British and American attitudes toward death in the twentieth century revolve around the themes of the denial and depersonalization of death. Among the earliest advocates of this position were Gorer (1955, 1965) and Mitford (1963). Gorer argued that the popularity of cremation in twentieth century Great Britain was an indicator that the British no longer faced death. Instead, the deceased were disposed of as quickly and painlessly as possible, and had no lasting impact on those left behind. Mitford's *The American Way of Death* (1963) presented a scalding exposé of the American mortuary industry, in which she claimed that funeral homes coerce Americans into buying lavish, expensive, and unnecessary services and products.

More than anything else, however, the landmark studies *Western Attitudes Toward Death* (1974) and *The Hour of Our Death* (1981) by French historian Philippe Ariès popularized the notion of the modern Western denial of mortality. Ariès stands as a giant in modern death studies because his work provided a catalyst to the modern study of the social history of death. In keeping with his orientation in the *Annales* school of French social history, Ariès was interested in changes in death practices over many centuries. From his examination of death in Western Europe and the United States from Medieval times to the twentieth century, Ariès developed two basic

themes. First, Ariès argued that in the Medieval period people had control over their own deaths. Mortality was an accepted part of life, rather than something to be feared. When a person felt his death approaching, he took the appropriate steps. The ailing person laid down in bed and gathered family and friends around them. He or she then bade farewell to loved ones and bestowed blessings upon them. A priest administered last rites, and the person slipped peacefully into death. Thus, Ariès's view of Medieval death was peaceful and public, with the dying person being an active participant in the proceedings. Over time, however, the "good death" of the Middle Ages changed. In the modern world, Ariès contends, death has been taken away from the dying. In modern industrial societies such as Western Europe and the United States, most deaths occur in hospitals. Instead of being surrounded by family and friends, the dying person is usually administered to by doctors and nurses, who have less emotional interest in the person than friends and family. As a result, death became depersonalized: it was just one more event that took place in a hospital's daily routine. In addition, Ariès argued that the medical establishment and the family typically conspire to keep the person from knowing of his or her imminent demise. In contrast with the Medieval period, then, the modern world has changed the dying person from an active participant to an unknowing, passive victim of forces that he or she cannot control.

Ariès's second theme concerns changes in the way people mourn the dead. In the Middle Ages, Ariès contends, the public display of grief was an accepted and expected part of mourning. Ariès cites Medieval literature such as the *Song of Roland* to show that warriors often broke down in tears upon the death of friends. Similarly,

elaborate funeral processions and other mourning rituals such as wailing and the tearing of hair illustrate the depth of feeling prevalent in the Middle Ages. Just as with the death itself, however, Ariès believes that the modern world has taken mourning away from those left behind. Today people are expected to handle death without an outward display of emotion. Grieving should be done in private, where no one else can see. Thus, to Ariès, the modern world has turned death and mourning from a public, healthy acceptance of the transition from one world to the next and made it a mysterious event to be dreaded.

Scholars have criticized Ariès's work on several grounds (Houlbrooke 1998; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Tarlow 1999). Ariès was highly subjective, and lacked a clear theoretical framework for evaluating data. For sources, Ariès relied primarily upon written documents and literature. Both of these sources were generated by literate elites, and may not reveal the true attitudes and thoughts of the mass of ordinary people. For the Medieval period, of course, such subjectivity is unavoidable, because most common folk were illiterate. However, Ariès's interpretations of modern death practices are also based largely on elite sources. For this reason, his interpretations are subject to doubt. Also, scholars have questioned whether Ariès's conclusions regarding Medieval attitudes, which were formulated using data from Catholic France, apply to other Western European nations such as England after the Protestant Reformation.

In addition, Ariès is open to criticism for his interpretation of modern deathways in the United States. Ariès clearly sees modern practices as a degeneration

from an ideal state in the past. Metcalf and Huntington (1991: 191-214) rightly point

out that changes in attitudes do not necessarily equal denial of death, as Ariès claims.

Rather, Metcalf and Huntington argue that modern American death practices, like any

other cultural institution, reflect contemporary American beliefs. In the twentieth

century, advances in medical science in industrialized nations such as the United States

have resulted in longer life spans. More people now live to old age, and have the

ability to live a full life. In the United States, the cultural idea of a full life consists of

growing up, finding a successful job, getting married and raising a family, and finally

retiring to enjoy one's remaining years. Death practices, Metcalf and Huntington

argue, reflect this social idea. People are supposed to pass away peacefully in hospitals

or nursing homes at the end of a long, successful life. After death, embalming

preserves the body so that friends and relatives can gather from distant places. By

preserving the body as he or she looked in life, embalming also shows mourners that

the person had reached the peaceful end that everyone seeks. Finally, the focus of

funerals has shifted from the deceased to the mourners. The visitation provides a time

for social interaction among the deceased's family and friends, while the burial itself is

no longer an important element of funerary ritual. While Metcalf and Huntington's

interpretation is not the final word on the modern American attitude toward death, it is

nonetheless valuable. Ariès's ideas were based on data from France, which he then

applied to the United States. Ariès also followed Mitford's (1963) ideas uncritically.

Metcalf and Huntington, on the other hand, base their interpretation on study of the

rituals involved within their proper sociocultural context. Also, Metcalf and

Huntington make interpretations of the data, rather than the value judgments of Mitford and Ariès, who clearly posit a "degenerationist" view of history.

Still, Ariès's work is valuable because it represents one of the first long-term diachronic studies of changing attitudes toward death. Ariès inspired many other scholars to investigate, criticize, and refine his ideas. For this reason, Ariès's scholarship remains a valuable starting point for those interested in the study of death in Western civilization since the Medieval period.

Rituals of Death and Memorialization

The study of mortuary rituals has been part of anthropology since its emergence as a scholarly discipline in the nineteenth century. The attitude of Edward Burnett Tylor, considered the "father of European anthropology," exemplifies nineteenth-century anthropological interpretations regarding death and memorialization. Tylor believed that ancient peoples invented religion partly as a means of coping with death. However, nineteenth-century anthropologists such as Tylor were Classical Cultural Evolutionists who believed that all societies evolved through a series of stages on the path from savagery to civilization. Death practices in traditional societies were believed to reflect the types of rituals that had existed among all peoples before the advent of modern industrial societies. Early anthropologists were interested in the mortuary rituals of traditional peoples not for what they could reveal about those cultures, but as evidence of primitive beliefs that had existed at an earlier stage of cultural evolution (Metcalf & Huntington 1991: 28, 30). Nevertheless, research by

early scholars such as Tylor was beneficial because it helped make the study of death and memorialization a fundamental element of anthropological investigation.

Interest in the study of death continued in the twentieth century, as armchair anthropology gave way to ethnographic fieldwork. The ethnographic approach, championed by scholars such as Franz Boas, emphasized understanding traditional societies on their own terms rather than trying to fit their customs into an evolutionary scheme. Ethnographers realized that death rituals represent one of the most ceremonial and symbolic of all human practices. As such, mortuary rituals represented a prime source of information about cultural beliefs. Descriptions of mortuary rituals soon became a standard part of ethnographies, and remain so today. In addition, ethnographic descriptions of death rituals provided abundant material for cross-cultural comparisons. Anthropologists noted many similarities in the mortuary rituals of different societies around the world. This led some scholars to propose the existence of cultural universals in funerary practices. Today, the search for universals is widely regarded as futile. Although many similarities in mortuary practices exist around the world, very few can be considered truly universal (Metcalf & Huntington 1991: 38). Research today, therefore, focuses on understanding mortuary customs within their particular sociocultural contexts. Various theoretical approaches have been devised to facilitate such study.

One of the most useful theoretical frameworks for the analysis of mortuary rituals was formulated early in the twentieth century by the French anthropologist Arnold van Gennep. In his classic work *The Rites of Passage* (1960), van Gennep

describes the rituals that accompany transitions from one stage of life to another. From birth, through puberty, to adulthood, and eventually death, all people occupy a number of different statuses. Each stage of life is clearly defined, but the transitions between them are not. These boundaries are times of uncertainty and danger. Rituals are necessary to enable one to transition successfully from one stage to another. Van Gennep recognized three types of rites of passage: rites of separation, rites of transition, and rites of incorporation. The first of these serves to sever the ties between the individual and his or her previous status. In the transitional phase, rituals bring the person across the boundary into the new status. Finally, rites of incorporation reintegrate the social order, solidifying the individual in his or her new position.

Van Gennep realized that, because many transitions were similar, so too did the rituals accompanying them employ similar processes and symbolism. For example, the ceremony by which a bride is escorted down the aisle by her father and given in marriage represents a rite of separation. The act symbolically cuts the ties that bind the bride to her status as daughter. Similarly, funeral processions separate the deceased from the status they once possessed within their family. Both of these examples employ a similar process, the ritual procession. In addition, they employ similar symbolism, including formal clothing and flowers.

In his examination of funerary rituals, van Gennep (1960: 146) expected that rites of separation would be most prominent, while rites of transition and incorporation would not be very elaborate. He found, however, that exactly the opposite was true. In dealing with the dead, separation is generally handled quickly. Transition and

incorporation, on the other hand, feature elaborate rituals. The rituals accompanying the incorporation of the deceased into the world of the dead are the most elaborate of all.

Van Gennep also noted that two distinct groups undergo funerary rites of passage. The first, as might be expected, is the deceased person. Before the body is committed to the ground, the individual exists in a transitional state. Rituals such as wakes help deal with the body while it is in this state. Interestingly, the other group that undergoes a rite of passage are the mourners – the deceased's friends and family. Their experience in some ways parallels that of the dead. While in mourning, they exist in a transitional state. They do not participate in the same normal, everyday life that they did prior to the death of their loved one. Also, while the transitional stage for the dead may last only up to a week or so, that for the mourners may last for months or years. The closer their relationship to the dead, the longer in general that they will remain in the transitional mourning stage.

Although written nearly a century ago, van Gennep's work remains useful today. Van Gennep was one of the first to demonstrate that the form of mortuary rituals is important. Also, his realization that close friends and relatives of the deceased may undergo extended periods of mourning and participate in mortuary rituals long after the funeral was a key development for the anthropological study of death. Van Gennep's research reveals that anthropologists need to pay close attention to all processes related to memorialization in order to most fully understand the meanings of death in particular societies.

Numerous scholars have expanded upon van Gennep's work. Victor Turner (1967, 1977) focused on the liminal phase, the middle stage of the rites of passage. During liminality, a person exists in an in-between state. The person no longer occupies their old status, but has not yet become incorporated into a new status either. Because the transitional phase is critical for moving a person from one status to another, it is typically accompanied by rituals. Turner has been criticized for taking van Gennep's ideas too far. In Turner's studies, the concept of liminality "is fantastically expanded, to the point where it is hard to describe a ritual (or much else) that is not in some sense a rite of passage" (Metcalf and Huntington 1991: 11). Also, Turner viewed the transitional phase as a period that could be studied on its own, whereas van Gennep stressed its relationship to the rites of separation and incorporation (Metcalf and Huntington 1991: 32-33). Despite such criticism, Turner's expansion of the concept of liminality greatly enhanced understanding of the processes that a person undergoes during the transitional phase.

Mary Douglas (1966) examined many of the rituals associated with liminality. According to Douglas, people in liminal states are dangerous because they are ambiguous. Anything associated with them can have power and danger. These things represent pollution, a danger to the society which must be dealt with by means of the appropriate rituals. Dead bodies are in a liminal state because they are neither alive nor buried. Funeral rituals were developed to help the corpse make the transition to the next world, which also eliminates the pollution from the society. Leach (2000) sees the actions of time as a pendulum swinging between the realm of the sacred and that of the

profane. Rituals accompanying sacred events require formal procedures, while those

dealing with profane periods are much more informal. Funerals, for example, are a

sacred experience that require solemnity and formal attire. Afterwards, the pendulum

swings back to the profane, wherein a wake might be celebrated with drunkenness and

bawdy humor.

A contemporary of van Gennep, Robert Hertz, also made an important

contribution to the study of mortuary rituals. Hertz (1960) analyzed the phenomenon

of double burials in southeast Asian cultures. These societies believed that upon death

the soul experienced a lengthy intermediate period before it was incorporated into the

world of the dead. The ritual of double burial performed this cultural belief in material

form. Initially, the corpse would be placed somewhere to rot. While the corpse was

decaying, the spirit existed in the liminal state, making its way to the land of the dead.

When the body reached the proper state of decomposition, it was buried for a second

time, this time permanently. At the same time, the corpse reached the land of the dead

and was incorporated into the afterlife. Hertz's major contribution was his

demonstration of how mortuary rituals serve as a performance in which cultural beliefs

are made concrete in the physical world. Therefore, studying the way in which a

society disposes of dead bodies represents one path to understanding cultural values.

The theoretical concepts developed by van Gennep, Hertz, Turner, and others

are still frequently cited today. Modern anthropological studies of death are concerned

largely with how mortuary practices reflect cultural values. In the words of Metcalf

and Huntington (1991: 25), "death throws into relief the most important cultural values

by which people live their lives and evaluate their experiences." Bloch and Parry (1982) present a series of essays that analyze the ways in which themes of regeneration and rebirth are enacted through mortuary rituals. A common theme of this collection is the ways by which rituals of regeneration act out core beliefs of the society. Analysis of the process and forms of mortuary rituals, therefore, should provide insights into deeply held cultural meanings.

Folklorists have also studied rituals associated with death and burial, although typically from a somewhat different perspective than anthropologists. Folkloristic studies have been interested not only in the rituals surrounding death and burial, but also the folktales, jokes, superstitions, ghost stories, and other lore that accompany them (e.g., Abrahams 1980; Abrahams 1982; Barber 1988; Coffin 1976; Richardson 1993; Santino 1994). The underlying premise, however is the same. Like death rituals, the folklore relating to death provides information about societal values.

The Material Culture of Death

Prehistoric archaeologists were among the first scholars to study the material culture of death, primarily because artifacts from burials represent a large portion of the dataset of prehistoric archaeology (Metcalf and Huntington 1991: 27). Early archaeologists, however, questioned the extent to which artifacts could be used to reconstruct cultural belief systems. V. Gordon Childe, the first person in the world to hold a professorship in prehistoric archaeology, stated that while archaeologists could interpret behavioral aspects from material culture, they could not "recapture Neandertal

man's ideas about a future life nor the theory of Cro-Magnon magic" (1945: 13).

Childe and his contemporaries worked under the cultural-historical paradigm, which

held that each culture produced a unique assemblage of artifacts. Cultural-historical

archaeologists were mainly interested in burials and grave goods as means to identify

cultures and track their diffusion. Neverthelesss, cultural-historical archaeologists did

agree that the form, placement, and orientation of graves, funerary architecture, and

grave goods reflected wealth and status distinctions in ancient societies. Studying

these distinctions would become a focus of the next theoretical paradigm to hold sway

in archaeology.

By the 1960s, cultural-historical archaeology gave way to processualism, with

new ideas about burial archaeology. A full account of processualist studies of burials

is beyond the scope of this study, which is not dealing with excavated material. Good

overviews are provided by Chapman and Randsborg (1981), Humphreys and King

(1981), and Parker Pearson (2000). A little must be said, however, about the mindset

of processual archaeology because of its approach to the study of material culture

relating to death. Processual archaeologists were mainly interested in what burials

could reveal about status and social organization within societies. In general,

processualists claimed that more elaborate graves with more valuable grave goods were

an indicator of higher social status (Binford 1971; Brown 1971; Saxe 1970). Other

archaeologists challenged these views. Ethnographic studies, for instance, showed that

in some societies high status individuals were buried without elaborate funerary

architecture or material possessions (Ucko 1969).

The dispute regarding rank and status in burials formed part of the larger theoretical debate within archaeology during the 1970s. Its importance lies in the way that processual archaeologists viewed material culture. Processualists were very concerned with making archaeology more scientific. They pioneered sampling techniques and advocated hypothesis testing. When studying burials, processualists often used statistical analyses to back up their claims regarding social status (e.g., Saxe 1970). Leading processualists such as Lewis Binford considered it the job of archaeologists to use artifact analysis to formulate cultural laws.

While the development of scientific techniques was a profitable part of archaeology's growth as a discipline, it did have some negative effects for the study of death. Processual archaeologists were more concerned with discovering cultural laws than understanding the people who lay behind the artifacts. Grave goods were assigned values so that they could be used in statistical analyses, without taking account of the symbolic meanings of the artifacts themselves within their cultural contexts. By the 1980s, post-processual archaeologists such as Ian Hodder (1982, 1986) rejected processualism in favor of a contextual approach that emphasized artifacts as part of symbolic systems. Over the past two decades, archaeological studies of death have taken more account of symbolism. Such an approach was not completely new, however. As early as the 1960s, historical archaeologists had begun to recognize the symbolic value of another form of the material culture of death: memorials.

Like burials and grave goods, memorials reflect cultural beliefs and values. Most early studies of memorials were performed from an art historical perspective. Nevertheless, early scholarship yielded several valuable insights. Harriet Forbes's *Gravestones of Early New England and the Men Who Made Them 1653-1800* (1967) was one of the first studies to recognize the potential that gravestones had for revealing cultural ideals. Forbes noted that gravestones reflected the spirit of their creators and taught moral lessons to the living. She also realized that the spatial patterning of gravestones was important. Their location in graveyards outside Puritan meeting-houses served as a comfort to those attending church services, while at the same time reminding the congregation of the fate that awaited them someday. Thus, Forbes recognized that gravestones are placed with an audience in mind, and that one of their functions is to communicate cultural values to that audience. Forbes (1967: 113) also emphasized the need to view gravestones "with the eyes of the past," an early statement on the importance of understanding the cultural context that produced the artifacts. This sentiment is echoed in Ludwig (1975), who also called for an interdisciplinary approach to the study of memorials.

By the 1960s, scholars in other fields recognized the value of memorials for revealing insights into cultural values and beliefs. In England, Esdaile (1946) and Anderson (1951) were among the first to point out the potential that churches and graveyards held for learning about English social history. Both agreed that memorials could be used to glean information about common people who were often left out of historical sources. Tarpley (1963: 323) pointed out that epitaphs on memorials record

"the grass-roots archives of folk fact and sentiment." More than any others, however, the archaeologists James Deetz and Edwin Dethlefsen brought the study of memorials into the cultural realm. Their work (Deetz 1977; Dethlefsen 1981; Dethlefsen and Deetz 1966) combined sound archaeological methodology with an awareness of the symbolic meanings of memorials. Deetz and Dethlefsen studied New England gravestones from the late seventeenth through the early nineteenth centuries. They considered gravestones to be well-suited for archaeological analysis because of their tight spatial and chronological control. More importantly, Deetz and Dethlefsen realized that gravestones reveal deep cultural meanings. By studying epitaphs on the gravestones, it is "possible to arrive at some statement concerning values regarding death" (Dethlefsen and Deetz 1966: 502). In addition, changes in gravestone symbolism that occurred from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries reflect "a wholly new way of looking at the world in which they lived" (Deetz 1977: 90). Deetz and Dethlefsen were thus among the first in archaeology to articulate the idea that memorials provide information about cultural values and worldview.

Deetz and Dethlefsen discussed three major symbols: death's heads, cherubs, and urns with willows. Death's heads were the dominant symbol on the earliest New England gravestones, which date to the seventeenth century, and remained in use until around the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the middle of the eighteenth century, cherubs became the dominant symbol. They remained popular until the early nineteenth century, when the urn and willow design rose to prominence. By charting seriation sequences, Dethlefsen and Deetz (1966: 504-505) realized that all three of

these symbols produced nearly perfect "battleship" curves. Deetz and Dethlefsen, however, went beyond merely describing the changes in design exhibited by New England gravestones. They also related them to changes in religious patterns in New England. The death's head was predominant during the height of Puritanism and symbolized the Puritan fixation on mortality. By the mid-1700s, however, Puritanism was giving way to beliefs that emphasized immortality and resurrection rather than death and decay. The cherub symbolized this more positive outlook toward death. Finally, urns and willows became popular when people began to emphasize memorializing a person's memory rather than dwelling on the fate of the soul. The most important aspect of Deetz and Dethlefsen's work was that it showed that gravestone symbols reflect larger societal values.

The pioneering efforts of Deetz and Dethlefsen inspired numerous studies of colonial New England gravestones. Although writing from an art historical perspective, Tashjian and Tashjian (1974: xiv) follow Deetz and Dethlefsen in asserting that gravestones are the product of a "network of ideas, attitudes, and values." Benes (1977) and Slater (1987) also examined the symbolic meanings of New England gravestones. Watters (1981: 5-9) criticizes earlier scholars for misinterpreting the symbolism of Puritan grave markers. In Watters's view, the form of the eyes of the death's heads and cherubs represents a peculiarly Puritan view of looking at the afterlife. Like the other studies of symbolism, Watters's interpretations are open to question. The point, however, is that Watters, like the previous scholars that he criticizes, accepts the idea that gravestones symbolically express the values of the

society that produced them. Thus, while Deetz and Dethlefsen's original interpretations have been called into question, their approach remains valid.

Other scholars have taken the study of gravestone symbolism beyond New England and to later time periods. Such studies continue to focus on gravestones as vehicles of value and worldview. Burgess (1979) represents the standard work on the symbolic meanings that can be gleaned from English memorials. Terry Jordan's *Texas Graveyards: A Cultural Legacy* (1982) was one of the first studies outside of New England to examine gravestones. Jordan demonstrates that patterns of ethnicity stand out clearly in gravestones. His work shows once again that cultural groups employ distinct gravestone symbolism and wording, and that these features convey information about the culture. Similar themes appear in work done on cemeteries in Georgia and South Carolina (Coombs 1987).

Meyer (1990) studied pioneer cemeteries in Oregon. Gravestones of Oregon pioneers fit into the broad pattern of nineteenth century American memorialization. Most gravestones have the same shapes as those found in other nineteenth-century American cemeteries, and they also feature many of the same symbols and inscriptions. Within this broad pattern, however, the pioneer gravestones also reflect a distinctly pioneer form of expression. Meyer (1990: 94-101) found two distinct ways in which the gravestones reflected the experiences of Oregon pioneers. First, many stones referred to the hazards of pioneer life. Deaths on the trail and attacks by Indians were often mentioned. Second, there was a tendency to emphasize the experiences of emigration. The dominant symbol of this was the covered wagon, which appears on

many pioneer gravestones. In addition, many gravestones mention the date that the person emigrated to Oregon. Meyer sees these stones as reflecting a sense of a shared group experience. The pioneers were proud of "conquering the west," and those who knew the hardships of this conquest shared a special bond. Pioneer roots and pioneer symbols are still important in Oregon today. Meyer's study is important because it reveals how a group that faces difficult experiences and overcomes dangers together expresses those shared experiences in their mortuary material culture.

Scholars have also examined the use of memorials in the construction and maintenance of ethnic traditions. Such work reveals how immigrant groups often use ethnic symbolism and language as indicators of identity when immigrating into new areas. This theme is explored in two edited works (Meyer 1992; Meyer 1993), which present collections of essays of ethnic studies of cemeteries throughout the United States. Many of the studies also describe how cemeteries serve as contested space, wherein new immigrant groups negotiate for place within the prevailing social order. Such studies show that memorials can also be useful for studying tensions between different social groups. Finch (1991) examines a similar theme in Scottish memorials from the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries, noting how memorials can be used to construct and negotiate social class identity.

Bereavement and Commemoration: An Archaeology of Mortality by Sarah Tarlow (1999) is the best recent archaeological study of memorials. Tarlow uses a material culture approach to study the way in which residents of the Orkney Islands commemorated their dead over the past 500 years. Tarlow's thesis is that

archaeologists need to study funeral monuments not only as indicators of social or economic status, but also as emotional relics left behind by grieving loved ones. By doing so, one can begin to understand the meanings that memorials held for the people who erected them. This emphasis on emotion sets Tarlow's work apart from other archaeological studies of burial and mourning. Instead of merely studying memorials as vehicles of cultural values, she attempts to understand the feelings behind them, which gives a much more human voice to the people of the past.

Interest in cemeteries and gravestones remains high. In the United Kingdom, English Heritage, a government-sponsored public organization devoted to preserving England's historic environment, maintains records of monuments of historical interest, including gravestones and cemeteries. It has been converting its records into electronic form, some of which are available online (http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/). Numerous local historical societies and individuals regularly record gravestones as well.   Similarly, American organizations such as the Association for Gravestone Studies (AGS) encourage the recording and conservation of historic cemeteries. The AGS also publishes *Markers*, an annual journal of gravestone studies, which regularly includes articles concerning historical and cultural aspects of cemeteries and gravemarkers.

Recent decades have seen the emergence of a unique and ephemeral form of memorial: spontaneous shrines. Research into spontaneous shrines is still in its infancy, and it is uncertain when this phenomenon first began. Visitors began leaving objects at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial immediately after its opening in 1982 (Haas

1998). The phenomenon may have its roots in the erection of roadside crosses to honor

those who died in car accidents, a subject that has been examined by several scholars

(Everett 2000, 2002). Some of the most famous shrines include those erected to

commemorate the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, the deaths of Princess Diana

(Biddle and Walter 1998; Bowman 1998; Evans 1998; Kear and Steinberg 1999;

Walter 1999) and John F. Kennedy Jr., the Columbine school shootings, the Texas

A&M University bonfire collapse (Grider 2000), and the terrorist attacks of September

11, 2001. It is clear that spontaneous shrines, like more permanent memorials such as

gravestones, reflect not only sorrow but also cultural values. Grider (2000), for

example, notes the prominent use of Christian imagery in the objects placed at the

scene of the Texas A&M bonfire collapse. While spontaneous shrines appear to be a

late twentieth century development, they are mentioned here because this study may

help shed light on their historical origins.

Along with other forms of material culture, sites themselves can be seen as

artifacts that reflect cultural ideas. In *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of*

Violence and Tragedy (1997), cultural geographer Kenneth Foote discusses how such

sites have been marked in the American landscape. Foote describes four processes that

can occur at places that are subject to tragic or violent events. The first of these,

sanctification, occurs when a site is officially consecrated by a dedication ceremony,

and usually involves the creation of a permanent monument. *Designation* is similar to

sanctification in that the site is marked, but there is no official dedicatory ceremony. In

Rectification, people clean up the site and bring it back into everyday use. The location

retains no permanent memory of the tragedy. Finally, during *obliteration*, people attempt to remove all traces of the event from the site. Unlike rectification, memory of the tragedy does linger, and the location is typically removed from use. The involvement of various levels of society can be seen in all four of these processes. Other scholars have also been interested in the way that historical events are memorialized in the landscape. Inglis (1998), King (1998), and Linenthal (1991) have examined battlefield memorials in Australia, Great Britain, and the United States. While such studies focus on the politics governing the decision to erect memorials and the forms they should take, they nevertheless provide valuable insights into the processes that occur when people decide to memorialize historial events.

In additions to memorials and sites of tragedy, scholars have examined other material culture associated with death and mourning. Rahtz (1981) provides a diverse catalog of Christian death artifacts from the Medieval period to the present. Material culture items examined by Rahtz include mourning jewelry, funeral invitations, paintings, hearses, and monuments. The nineteenth century, an era of ostentation in funerary architecture, also saw the use of other elaborate mourning objects. Morley (1971) and Pike (1984) describe items such as mourning rings, decorated hearses, and elaborate invitations that characterized wealthy funerals in nineteenth-century England and America. Like rituals and memorials, the portable artifacts of death can yield insight into cultural beliefs and attitudes.

Summary

For the most part, studies of death and memorialization have followed the prevailing scholarly paradigms of the time. Early studies by historians focused on the elites who had left behind written documents. The development of an emphasis on social history within historiography in the 1960s resulted in the appearance of studies dealing with changes in the death practices of common people. The field of history is well suited for studying changes in attitudes toward death of both elites and ordinary people over time, and studies of both groups are published today (e.g., Behrendt 1997). In anthropology, nineteenth-century cultural evolutionists viewed mortuary rituals as fragments of practices that our ancestors once practiced. Anthropology then progressed through the search for cultural universals before coming ultimately to the realization that death rituals are so diverse that few universals exist. Today, anthropological studies of mortuary ritual are more concerned with how such rituals reflect the values of a society. In archaeology, early interest centered on grave goods, especially those from elaborate burials, as indicators of status and rank within prehistoric societies. The New Archaeology of the 1960s and 1970s introduced many useful techniques, but retained the old fascination with elites, status, and power. In the 1980s, archaeologists became more interested in burials and other forms of the material culture of death in terms of the symbolic meanings that they embodied. Post-processual archaeology emphasizes understanding symbols within their specific cultural contexts. In folkloristics, studies of death also mirrored the scholarly development of the field. Folklorists were originally interested in traditional genre-

based approaches, studying such things as folktales and songs relating to death. In the 1960s and 1970s, folklorists became more interested in the material culture of death and the performance of death rituals. Today, folklorists are among the leaders in studying gravestones and spontaneous shrines.

Within the study of death and memorialization, those approaches that help reconstruct or determine cultural values and worldview will be most important for learning about mariners as a folk group. Both anthropologists and folklorists have shown how cultural values are enacted during rituals involved with the disposal of the dead. For mariners, therefore, examining burial at sea as a ritual performance that enacts cultural values should prove to be a profitable avenue of research. The material culture of death also carries cultural meanings. In particular, memorials represent a largely untouched source of information about maritime worldview and values. With their tight chronological control, memorials should also prove particularly useful for studying changes over time.

Before turning to the study of maritime rituals and material culture relating to death, it is necessary to digress to a short examination of sailors and maritime communities. Mariners identify themselves with particular memorial imagery and inscriptions precisely because they are a folk group with shared cultural beliefs and values. The next step, then, is to examine maritime culture in England and America to understand the characteristics that mark mariners as an occupational folk group.

CHAPTER III

ANGLO-AMERICAN MARINERS AS AN OCCUPATIONAL FOLK GROUP

From the beginning of global seafaring in the fifteenth century until the end of the Age of Sail in the twentieth century, seafaring provided a source of livelihood for millions of men and women from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities. Often dangerous, always adventurous, the life of a sailor was one of the most dramatic and exciting occupations of its time. This chapter explores the ways that Anglo-American mariners fit the theoretical concept of the folk group.

Theory of Folk Groups

The study of maritime folklore, like the field of folkloristics in general, has undergone significant changes in the past several decades. Early scholarship consisted primarily of genre-oriented collections of sea lore. Such studies are extremely useful because they provide the groundwork upon which more recent scholarship is based. Since the 1970s, however, scholars have adopted a more contextually-oriented approach to the study of maritime lore. Research such as Byington's (1985) work with tugboat crews aims to uncover the contexts in which traditional interactions operate within maritime groups, and the meaning of the folklore to the group. This approach grew out of the interest in folk groups that developed in American folkloristics in the second half of the twentieth century.

Brunvand (1998: 48-70) provides an introductory historical overview of the study of American folk groups. Around the beginning of the twentieth century, many

scholars denied that America possessed any folklore at all, or argued that the only

folklore present on the continent consisted of "fast-vanishing" remnants brought over

from Europe. Eventually, folklorists realized that American society possessed much

indigenous folklore. Indeed, Brunvand contends that folklore and folk groups are

constantly being created in America. Brunvand divides American folk groups into six

broad categories: 1) occupational groups; 2) age groups; 3) family groups; 4) gender

groups; 5) regional groups; and 6) ethnic, nationality, and religious groups. All of

these groups have been the subject of study by American folklorists.

Sailors, of course, fall into Brunvand's first category, occupational groups.

Examination of other scholarship dealing with occupational groups helps determine

approaches to the study of the maritime folk group. Robert McCarl (1985, 1986)

studied the occupational folklore of Washington D.C. firefighters. McCarl was very

concerned with the performance aspect of the firefighters' lore. Much of his study

concerns the rites of passage that mark the transition from apprentice to skilled worker.

For example, McCarl describes a discussion by a group of firefighters after their return

from the scene of a fire. Four experienced firefighters and a rookie discuss their

experiences at the fire, while the older men also compare this blaze to others they have

known. The discussion allows the men to talk about techniques in an informal setting.

In addition, the highest-ranking firefighter compliments the rookie by telling him that

"you worked your ass off tonight" (McCarl 1986: 73). Thus, this discussion exposes

the rookie to group value and beliefs, while also letting him know that his work is

progressing at a satisfactory rate. Throughout his ethnography, McCarl always

describes the exact context in which such performances occur. In the example cited above, McCarl tells how the discussion occurred as the firefighters refilled their compressed air tanks. For another example illustrating how retiring firefighters pass on their knowledge to the next generation, McCarl describes the setting of a celebratory dinner at the firehouse. He includes details such as the variety of food served and the type of tablecloths used. All of these details provide a context for the firefighters' folklore that allows the reader to more fully appreciate the complex folklife of this occupational group.

In *The Dynamics of Folklore*, Barre Toelken also provides excellent contextual information for another occupational group, loggers (Toelken 1996: 55-79). Following Edward T. Hall (1976), Toelken (1996: 57) defines loggers as a *high context folk group*. A high context folk group is one in which members share a great deal of information that is not privy to outsiders, and also conduct themselves according to a set of customs and beliefs that are known only to the members of the group. High context folk groups are so interconnected to one another that for them "meaning and action are more directly related to context than to the simple denotations of words themselves" (Toelken 1996: 57). Thus, in order to understand a high context folk group, the folklorist must study all details of the contexts in which traditional interactions occur. The goal is not only to catalog the context in which folk group interaction occurs, but also to understand the meaning of the traditions to the members of the folk group. The following sections present a contextual analysis of the traditional interactions practiced by Anglo-American mariner during the Age of Sail.

Who is a Sailor? How the Folk Group Defined Itself

Folk groups have their own ways of determining who is and who is not a member. For ethnic or national groups, one is typically born into the folk group. Members of religious groups might be born into a particular group, but decide to leave the folk group later. By the same token, a person can become a member of a religious folk group by actively participating in its traditions, provided he or she is accepted by the other members of the group. Membership in occupational groups is not typically hereditary. While some families might maintain a tradition of working in a particular job, one does not automatically become a member of the steel mill worker folk group just because one's father was a mill worker. Even if there is a family connection, a person still has to learn and participate in the active traditions of the group in order to become a member. Likewise, people entering the profession from outside must also pass through a period of learning and initiation in order to become members of the folk group. Merely acquiring a job in the profession is not enough; it takes effort and time to become a member of the folk group. In addition to mastering certain job skills, becoming a member of a folk group often involves adopting a particular style of dress, learning an esoteric vocabulary, and undergoing initiation rituals. All of these elements were part of the process of becoming a sailor.

Age

Seafaring was a young man's profession. Rodger's (1996: 78) study of the Royal Navy during the Seven Years' War revealed that 53% of Able Bodied seamen

and 85% of Ordinary Seamen and Landmen were age 25 or younger. English censuses from the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries record that the average sailor was between 22 and 24 years of age and had been in the profession for seven years (Rodger 1996: 114). Most American seamen were in their teens and twenties as well (Creighton 1985: 15). McKee (1991: 45) found that two-thirds of early U.S. naval officers began their careers between the ages of 12 and 18.

There were several reasons why young men dominated seafaring. Learning the job skills required to work aboard ship took months or years. Sailors had to learn the names, functions, and means of use of all of the thousands of ropes and tackle that made up a vessel's rigging. They had to learn how to handle sails, maintain a ship at sea, and read weather and water conditions. In addition to the long period of time required to learn the job, working aloft in a ship's rigging demanded young, dexterous men. A youthful constitution was also an asset for enduring the rigors of shipboard life and the varied climates that seamen visited. Eighteenth-century English ship master Samuel Kelly, for example, once refused to let a man sign on because he was "about seventy years of age and very unfit to go to sea" (Garstin ed. 1925: 24). Kelly went on to state that in seafaring "one fright after another undermines the most robust constitution and brings on apparent old age in the prime of life" (Garstin ed. 1925: 138). Because of the rigors of seafaring life, many sailors left the sea by age thirty.

There is some evidence that more English sailors than American sailors remained in seafaring as a lifelong profession. According to Rediker (1987: 295-297), this was due to the different economic conditions in England and America. In

England, inclosure laws forced many people from their land by the mid-eighteenth century. The dispossessed moved to the growing cities, forming the new class of urban wage laborers. The necessity of earning a living through wage labor forced many young men into seafaring. Thus, by 1750, a core of lifelong professional sailors existed in England. In America, on the other hand, most people made their living through agriculture throughout the eighteenth century. Men would go to sea for a few years, then return to the land to work in farming or other land-based professions.

With its youthful character and high turnover rate, seafaring was similar to other occupational folk groups. Loggers were also typically young men who worked the forests for a few years before moving on to some other profession (Toelken 1996: 68-69). The logger folk group maintained and transmitted its traditions through a core of experienced men, some of whom practiced logging as a lifelong occupation. The same was undoubtedly true for seafaring (Rediker 1987: 156-157). Although many men left the sea by the age of thirty, a core of lifelong sailors existed. In part, this consisted of older common seamen. According to Rediker (1987: 156), the crew of a typical large eighteenth-century merchant vessel included about ten common sailors. On average, one of these would be in his late teens, six in their twenties, two in their thirties, and only one age forty or older. In the naval service, older sailors who could no longer work aloft were assigned as "waisters": men who worked in the waist of the ship and performed tasks such as hauling on ropes to work the sails. Officers tended to be somewhat older than the average common sailor. While it was difficult for common sailors to become commissioned officers in either the Royal Navy or the United States

Navy, it was easier for such men to become petty officers in either the naval or merchant services. Sailors who attained officer rank were more likely to remain in seafaring as a lifelong profession. This core of older common seamen and officers was probably responsible for the maintenance of many of the customs of the maritime folk group.

Gender

Seafaring was overwhelmingly a male occupation. Women were believed to be bad luck at sea (Bassett 1971: 110), but this superstition alone does not completely explain why few women went aboard ship. The best explanation seems to be that seafaring, like other outdoor occupations such as logging and cowboying, was viewed as a male profession. Despite superstition and cultural views, however, some women did go to sea. The wives of merchant or whaling captains sometimes accompanied their husbands to sea (Cordingly 2001: 109-137; Springer 1996), other women found fame as pirates (Rediker 1996), and some women disguised themselves as men in order to serve in the naval services (Rodger 1996: 77; Stark 1996: 82-122). In the Royal Navy, not all women were forced to adopt disguise, however. Most large Royal Navy warships had several women aboard while at sea. Usually, these were the wives of commissioned or warrant officers (Lavery 1989: 141; Rodger 1996: 76). Common seamen were not permitted to bring women to sea, although they sometimes managed to sneak them aboard. Women aboard Royal Navy vessels often assisted the ship's surgeon during battle or performed various other tasks aboard ship. At the Battle of the

Nile in August 1798, British sailor John Nicol noted that women helped the ship's boys

carry gunpowder to the cannon. He praised their efforts, stating:

> The women behaved as well as the men, and got a present for their bravery
> from the grand signior...I was much indebted to the gunner's wife who gave her
> husband and me a drink of wine every now and then, which lessened our
> fatigue much. There were some of the women wounded, and one woman
> belonging to Leith died of her wounds and was buried on a small island in the
> bay. One woman bore a son in the heat of the action. She belonged to
> Edinburgh (Flannery ed. 1999: 174-175)

Nicol's account demonstrates that life at sea could be as dangerous for women

mariners as it was for men.

Their relatively small numbers at sea did not mean that women were not an

integral part of the maritime folk group. Many other women - mothers, wives,

prostitutes, and others - formed a key component of maritime communities. The role

of these women is discussed in the section on maritime communities (page 80).

Race and Ethnicity

Seafaring, which took vessels to exotic ports around the world, provided the

opportunity for men from many nationalities and ethnic groups to sign aboard English

and American vessels. Many Portuguese and some South Pacific Islanders, such as

Melville's Queequeg, sailed aboard American whaling ships. Native Americans, who

had been involved in hunting whales from small boats since before the European

colonization of the New World, also went to sea aboard American whalers. By the

early-nineteenth century, it is estimated that Native Americans comprised about 12.5%

of whaling crews (Bauer 1988: 235). Despite their numbers, the contributions of

Native Americans and most other ethnic groups aboard ship during the Age of Sail have not yet been studied in detail.

One group that has been studied in recent years is black sailors. Many blacks served in the Royal Navy by the mid-eighteenth century (Rodger 1996: 159-161), and both free blacks and slaves also crewed American vessels. Bolster (1997: 2) estimates that about 20% of American merchant sailors were black by the early nineteenth century. Black sailors remained a prominent part of American ship crews until the mid-nineteenth century, when the decline in American merchant shipping and discrimination in favor of new white immigrant sailors forced most blacks out of American merchant seafaring (Bolster 1997: 229).

Among their white shipmates, attitudes toward black sailors varied. Sailors, who valued freedom and independence, did not typically approve of slavery or other forms of servitude (Rediker 1987: 46). John Nicol, for example, pitied the plight of slaves in the West Indies. While at one island, female slaves were brought aboard to sell fruit to the sailors. One of the slave masters

> was flogging one on our deck, who was not very well in her health. He had struck her once as if she had been a post. The poor creature gave a shriek. Some of our men, I knew not which - there were a good many near him - knocked him overboard. He sunk like a stone. The men gave a hurra! One of the female slaves leaped from the boat alongside into the water and saved the tyrant, who, I have no doubt, often enough beat her cruelly (Flannery ed. 1999: 37).

Regarding the treatment of slaves, Nicol also states that "no stranger can witness the cruelty unmoved," and claims that "I esteemed them in my heart" (Flannery ed. 1999: 67, 69). An attitude of toleration toward black sailors seems to have been

present in the eighteenth-century Royal Navy, as Rodger (1996: 161) reports that on the whole black sailors received decent treatment aboard British warships.

Other sailors, however, did not subscribe to such liberal views as Nicol. For black sailors, discrimination was often a part of life (Bolster 1997; Creighton 1985; Putney 1987). Creighton's (1985: 99-101) examination of diaries of nineteenth-century American mariners revealed that officers typically gave harsher punishments to black sailors than to white ones. Blacks were also more likely to be relegated to menial tasks such as stewards and cooks (Bolster 1997: 216).

It is important to remember, however, that such discrimination was a product of the times. As Bolster (1997: 5) points out, blacks faced equally bad or worse treatment on land. Racism was part of the attitude of most whites of the period. Whites believed themselves inherently superior to other ethnic groups. Eighteenth-century English mariner William Spavens, for example, exemplifies this attitude in his comments about Chinese. While in China, Spavens spent time wandering about the countryside and observing the people, who were "industrious, lively, and active" (1998: 144). Notwithstanding these positive comments, Spavens went on to say that

> Their whole nation, a few excepted, are a set of the most accomplished thieves upon the face of the earth, the Russians and Tartars not excepted; they steal, and encourage others to do so; they buy stolen goods, and take every advantage in buying, selling, &c. to cheat, go beyond, and defraud any person they have concern or dealing with: Knavery is so prevalent and habitual among them, that they will plead custom for it instead of law (1999: 144).

Such attitudes simply formed part of the Anglo-American worldview during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Aboard ship, the degree of racism a black sailor faced depended to a large degree on his position. Cooks and stewards were more likely to be treated badly, but blacks who became Able Bodied or Ordinary seamen were generally treated with more respect. These men had proven themselves and were treated by and large the same as other sailors (Bolster 1997: 77-81).

The experiences of black sailors illustrate a fundamental characteristic of the maritime folk group. Occupational folk groups value the skilful performance of job-related tasks (Toelken 1996: 64). Among sailors, skilful seamanship was one of the most valuable traits a man could possess. As Bolster (1997: 81) notes for black sailors, the ability to hand, reef, and steer was more important than the color of one's skin. It is probable that the same rule applied to other ethnic groups as well. Good seamen, whatever their ethnicity, likely received more respect than others. However, much work remains to be done to test this hypothesis and illuminate the dynamics of race and ethnicity in seafaring.

Appearance and Attitude

Clothing, hairstyles, and personal ornamentation are three of the most important ways by which humans express themselves and their group affiliations. The symbols that these three classes of objects represent operate on more than one level. Some symbols are understood by all people in society, while others are recognized only by members of a particular subculture. For example, in our society, three-piece suits denote professional men, while blue jeans, flannel shirts, and work boots often indicate

blue-collar workers. Both of these classifications would be recognized by the majority of people in American society. On the other hand, G-shock dive watches mark a particular subculture, as does brightly colored hair. Such symbols might not be understood by the majority of society, but they nevertheless convey information to those in the same subculture. Toelken (1996: 59) describes the distinctive outfit common to loggers in the American northwest. Items such as a hickory shirt, tin pants (actually made of canvas or rubber), and cork boots made a logger instantly recognizable to other loggers and knowledgeable outsiders. Likewise, sailors used clothing and personal ornamentation to set themselves apart as a folk group.

Ned Ward's *Wooden World Dissected*, published in 1707, provides a description of the type of clothing favored by eighteenth-century sailors. According to Ward, sailors wore tarred jackets and wide-kneed trousers (Lloyd 1968: 111). Eighteenth-century illustrations of sailors (e.g., Lloyd 1968, facing page 64) show a striped shirt, short jacket (called a "bum freezer" because it offered no protection for the backside), neckerchief, and hat. This became the general style for Royal Navy seamen throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although there were variations. Trousers were always wide-legged for ease of movement, and were usually white (Lavery 1989: 204). Checked shirts were popular as well as striped ones. Several styles of hat were worn, according to climate and personal tastes. Hats with small brims were favored because they stayed upon the head in windy weather and were not easily dislodged when working in the rigging (Lavery 1989: 204), although sailors often wore broad-brimmed straw hats when in warm climates. By contrast, a

typical male on land in the eighteenth century wore a long coat, slim knee breeches, stockings, and a cocked hat with a wide brim (Olsen 1999: 102-105). Royal Navy sailors called their clothing style "short clothes" in contrast to the "long clothes" worn by landsmen (Rodger 1996: 64).

William Robinson, who wrote under the pen name "Jack Nastyface," states that he received purser's "slops" when he enlisted in the Royal Navy in 1805 (Robinson 1973: 28). "Slops" consisted of clothing that the ship's purser sold to new recruits or other sailors when their garments wore out (Lavery 1989: 203-204). Sailors might also purchase raw fabric from time to time, and one of the skills a man learned aboard ship was how to fashion sets of clothing suitable for the varying climates that sailors visited. To do this, he relied upon the traditions of his shipmates. The result was a distinctive style of dress that reflected the customs of the folk group. A story from Nastyface's memoir illustrates just how distinctive sailors' clothing was. About six months after enlisting, when HMS *Revenge* arrived back in England after the battle of Trafalgar, Nastyface was granted liberty for six days. He decided to visit relatives in London, and set out walking from Portsmouth, Britain's major naval base on the southern coast of England, towards the capital city. He had not gone far when he was stopped by a roving band of soldiers on the lookout for runaway sailors. Nastyface showed them his pass, and was allowed to proceed. Nevertheless, every few miles, Nastyface was stopped and questioned by soldiers who believed him to be a deserting sailor. He was even recognized as a sailor thirty miles inland (Robinson 1973: 66-69). The fact that

Nastyface could be identified as a sailor, even in areas far from the coast, shows that

sailors had a very distinctive form of appearance.

By 1875, when Sam Noble joined the Royal Navy, there was a dress code in

place. However, the official sailor uniform chosen by the Admiralty was merely a

variation of the traditional clothing style already favored by sailors. The short jacket,

loose trousers, neckerchief, and hat were all retained, but their colors were

standardized. Blue shirts, jackets, and trousers were used for everyday wear, while

white served for special occasions. Black became the official color for the neckerchief

and the canvas hat. The hat was equipped with a ribbon sporting the ship's name in

gold letters, a carryover of a practice traditional to Royal Navy sailors (Kemp 1970:

203). Within the confines of their official uniform, sailors found ways to express

themselves as a folk group. Here is Noble's description of his first sight of Royal Navy

seamen on the waterfront of Portsmouth:

> The wide expanse of water forming the fairway was teeming with life and
> bustle – penny steamers darting hither and thither; pinnaces, jolly-boats and
> cutters, laden with the day's provisions, and pulled along by brawny Jack Tars
> barefooted, in short-sleeved, open-necked jumpers, showing off their hairy
> arms and breasts brown with exposure under many suns, and with their caps
> hanging at such an angle on their heads that it was a wonder to me they didn't
> fall off, who went lumbering and tumbling back to their respective ships, like
> plump jolly housewives returning from the market (Noble 1925: 9-10).

Noble's description shows that the independent, devil-may-care attitude with

which sailors carried themselves was as important a marker of their folk group as the

clothing itself. This is also illustrated by Richard Henry Dana, Jr.'s description of his

first experiences upon joining the American brig *Pilgrim*. Merchant seaman wore a

clothing style very similar to their naval cousins, but Dana soon learned that it took

more than clothing to make a man a sailor:

> The change from the tight dress coat, silk cap and kid gloves of an
> undergraduate at Cambridge, to the loose duck trowsers, checked shirt and
> tarpaulin hat of a sailor, though somewhat of a transformation, was soon made,
> and I supposed that I should pass very well for a jack tar. But it is impossible to
> deceive the practised eye in these matters; and while I supposed myself to be
> looking as salt as Neptune himself, I was, no doubt, known for a landsman by
> every one on board as soon as I hove in sight. A sailor has a peculiar cut to his
> clothes, and a way of wearing them which a green hand can never get. The
> trowsers, tight around the hips, and thence hanging long and loose round the
> feet, a super-abundance of checked shirt, a low-crowned, well varnished black
> hat, worn on the back of the head, with half a fathom of black ribbon hanging
> over the left eye, and a peculiar tie to the black silk neckerchief, with sundry
> other minutiae, are signs, the want of which betray the beginner, at once (Dana
> 1986: 3).

In addition to clothing and attitude, other items of appearance marked sailors as

a folk group. Seamen wore their hair differently than landsmen. The typical male of

the eighteenth century wore his hair close-cropped, and often donned a wig (Olsen

1999: 102). Seamen, on the other hand, preferred long hair. They had no use for wigs,

which would quickly blow away in the wind. Often, sailors braided their hair and wore

it as pigtails. This practice continued until the late nineteenth century. Sailors were

typically heavily tanned from long exposure to the sun, which set them apart in

England or the northeastern United States. As mentioned above, one of Noble's first

impressions of sailors was of their suntanned chests (Noble 1925: 9), and Dana (1986:

3) states that his white complexion gave him away as a landsmen. Sailors also walked

with a distinctive rolling step, an adaptation to walking on heaving decks at sea, that

easily identified them when on land.

Finally, tattoos served as one of the most distinguishing characteristics of sailors. For many sailors, getting their first tattoo was one of the steps that marked them as members of the maritime folk group. Nineteenth-century American sailor Charles Tyng got his first tattoos during the lengthy passage from China to the Cape of Good Hope:

> During this passage, Black, who had procured some cakes of India ink when in Canton, commenced to prick it into the arms of the crew who wished it. I had often noticed it on the hands and arms of sailors, but never had seen the operation. Black seemed to be a master of the art, having learned it when a prisoner in the Dartmoor prison. His instrument was three common sewing needles fastened round a pointed stick, the points being a little separated from one another, and a small saucer with a little of the ink mixed with water. He would dip the needles in to the saucer and commence pricking just raising the skin, not bringing blood, on the letters or figures previously marked out with the ink (Fels ed. 1999: 49).

Tyng's description of the process shows that tattooing was a distinctly folk tradition among sailors. Braddock Black, who performed the tattooing, learned how to do so while a prisoner of war, no doubt from another American seaman. Tyng next describes the subjects favored by sailors:

> I had letters, anchors, hearts, on my hands and arms, and a fancy double heart with C.T. in one, and S.H. in the other, red roses between, each heart pierced with cupid's dart, the red showing the drops of blood dropping from the wound. This was on the left arm. On the right was pricked a cross, with the Saviour nailed to it, and red showing the wounds in the hands, feet, and side, an anchor and a large letter T. On the back of my left hand was an anchor and on my middle finger was a heart representing a ring (Fels ed. 1999: 49).

The anchor, symbol of maritime identity and religion (see chapter 9), was one of the most popular subjects for sailors' tattoos. Sailors pining for their wives or sweethearts back home also incorporated their names and images into their tattoos, just as they did in diaries (Creighton 1985: 195) and sea shanteys. The "S.H." that Tyng

refers to was Sarah Hickling, a young woman from Boston whom he fell in love with.

Unfortunately, she became engaged to another man while Tyng was at sea. Her fiancee

died shortly before Tyng returned, and on his arrival "I found her in mourning for him.

I then found my love had somewhat dampened" (Fels ed. 1999: 44). Tyng's loss of

ardour illustrates one of the problems with tattoos: once in place, they were nearly

impossible to remove. As such, they represented one of the most permanent markers

of membership in the maritime folk group. Later in life, Tyng regretted getting tattoos,

and sought a means to remove them:

> Some years after, I became very much ashamed of them, and got my brother
> Dudley to try to remove them by caustics. He tried several things on the finger,
> but nothing would remove them. The anchor on the back of my left hand was
> very annoying to me as it appeared to me everybody was looking at it and I was
> determined to get rid of it. Finding my brother, who was a physician, could not
> remove them, I marked the anchor with aqua fortis, which deadened the skin,
> and with my knife cut it out. It was rather a dangerous operation, over the veins
> and chords on the back of the hand, but the anchor was gone, leaving rather a
> bad scar (Fels ed. 1999: 50).

Most sailors most likely did not resort to the drastic measures employed by

Tyng, choosing instead to remain marked as a sailor for the rest of their days.

Given their distinctive appearances, sailors would have been instantly

recognizable the moment they set foot on land. Appearance served as a means to

express group affiliation and set themselves apart as a distinct folk group. In addition

to informing landsmen of this group affiliation, however, some items of sailors'

apparel also conveyed information to other mariners. For example, the practice in the

Royal Navy of wearing ribbons embroidered with the name of one's ship functioned as

an expression of group affiliation and pride. Within the Royal Navy, ships and their

crews earned reputations based upon such attributes as discipline, sailing ability, and fighting spirit. Displaying the name of one's ship informed others that you were a member of a crack ship, served under a distinguished commander, or were not a person to be trifled with. Parts of this message might be understood by the public, but most of it remained knowable only to members of the folk group, who were "in the know" regarding the inner workings of the Navy.

Initiation Rituals

Newcomers to stressful or dangerous professions are often forced to undergo initiation rituals. Initiation typically represents a "trial by ordeal," wherein the neophyte is forced to undergo various forms of degradation, ranging from verbal abuse to physical torment. For example, Haas (1972; 1989: 91-95) describes how high-steel ironworker apprentices are degradingly called "punk" or "boy," and forced to do menial tasks such as retrieving tools or fixing coffee. The novice is also stripped of previous rank, and can even be forced to undergo humiliation by persons who might normally be at a lower status. Medical interns, for instance, are sometimes forced to take orders from nurses or clerks (Haas 1989: 90). At the end of initiation, there is typically a ritual ceremony that shows that the newcomer has survived the initiation and is accepted by the group.

Jack Nastyface reports that experienced sailors often stole shoes and clothing from new recruits (Robinson 1973: 28-30). The old hands were particularly cruel to "Lord Mayor's Men," the term for men who were sent to sea because they had

committed crimes. According to Nastyface (1973: 26), "These poor fellows have a sad time of it, as they are the derision of the old and more experienced and hardened sailors, who generally cut the tails from their coats, and otherwise ridicule and abuse them." Cutting the tails from coats seems to be a means of transforming the long clothes of a landsman to the short dress of a sailor. As such, it served as a harsh first step towards membership in the folk group.

Sam Noble also endured cruel treatment during his first days in the Royal Navy. During his first hour aboard ship, Noble and other new recruits were subjected to verbal abuse from other sailors. While the group of newcomers waited to be assigned quarters, a gang of older seamen encircled them and taunted them so cruelly that Noble eventually burst into tears (Noble 1925: 17). The verbal abuse continued for several days, until Noble worked up the courage to fight one of the older hands. Once he had done so, the more experienced seamen ceased their insults and began to show him respect (Noble 1925: 25).

As a novice sailor aboard the *Pilgrim*, Richard Dana experienced his share of initiation rites. During his first week at sea, Dana was very confused concerning what duties he should perform. No one stepped forward to give him any clear direction; instead, whenever the officers would see him standing around at a loss, they would order him to perform some unpleasant task. For example, he was once sent aloft to grease the main mast from the top of the royal (the highest sail) all the way down to the deck (Dana 1986: 8). Such arbitrary punishments were not reserved only for newcomers, however: the captain of the *Pilgrim* was a very harsh man, and often

subjected the entire crew to degrading treatment. Dana mentions that the captain once ordered the crew on deck during a heavy rainstorm, and made them stand in the cold rain for several hours. Such treatment, which the sailors referred to as "hazing," was common practice aboard ships with cruel officers (Dana 1986: 75).

Not all American vessels were ruled by tyrannical officers. Aboard the American barque *Royalshire*, Alfred Basil Lubbock's superiors were much kinder. Lubbock had to do a variety of unpleasant tasks, such as cleaning out the hold prior to sailing, and swabbing the decks every day. Nevertheless, these duties were performed by all the men on the *Royalshire*, both apprentices and experienced hands alike. Still, part of Lubbock's good treatment was due to the kindness of the officer in charge of his watch, who did not believe in driving his men too hard. Not all of the officers shared this sentiment. Lubbock's friend Don Henderson was in a different watch, commanded by an officer who routinely forced him to perform all of the worst jobs. As a result, Lubbock says, Henderson did twice as much work as anyone else in his watch (Lubbock 1948: 281).

Although often cruel, initiation rituals served a valuable function aboard ship. The safe operation of a vessel required competent seamen. Degrading treatment toward newcomers helped to weed out those who did not have the desire or ability to become full members of the group. Forcing a neophyte sailor to slush a mast, for example, tested whether new men were suited to work aloft. Demonstrating competence in such situations helped forge the bonds of trust that were crucial among men working together in such a dangerous environment.

Fo'c'sle and Mess: Folklore of the Living Situation

Within the confines of a ship, there were designated living spaces for different members of the crew. Officers typically resided in the stern of the ship, while the crew berthed in the fo'c'sle (sailor jargon for *forecastle*), located in the bow. Although often cramped, the crew's quarters provided a social atmosphere for new crew members to integrate with older ones, and a context for traditional knowledge to be passed along.

Richard Dana, however, did not get to enjoy the benefits of forecastle life when he first came aboard the *Pilgrim*. Instead, Dana and several other newcomers were ordered to berth in the "steerage," a compartment below the main deck, which was also used for the storage of equipment. In this manner, the apprentices were segregated from the sailors until they could prove their worth. Dana says of the steerage,

> while there, however useful and active you may be, you are but a mongrel – and sort of afterguard and 'ship's cousin'. You are immediately under the eye of the officers, cannot dance, sing, play, smoke, make a noise, or *growl*, (i.e. complain,) or take any other sailor's pleasure; and you live with the steward, who is usually a go-between; and the crew never feel as though you were *one of them*. But if you live in the forecastle, you are 'as independent as a woodsawyer's clerk', (nauticé,) and are a *sailor* (Dana 1986: 41-42).

After over four months at sea, Dana and another newcomer petitioned the captain to let them move into the fo'c'sle. To their great delight the request was granted. From that time on, Dana felt himself more of a sailor, and spent the remainder of his seafaring time living in the fo'c'sle. Dana's description of fo'c'sle life provides an excellent glimpse of the richness of this context for traditional folk interaction:

> You hear sailors' talk, learn their ways, their peculiarities of feeling as well as speaking and acting; and moreover pick up a great deal of curious and useful information in seamanship, ship's customs, foreign countries, &c., from their long yarns and equally long disputes. No man can be a sailor, or know what

sailors are, unless he has lived in the forecastle with them – turned in and out with them, eaten of their dish and drank of their cup (Dana 1986: 42).

In this passage, Dana mentions learning "ship's customs," a sure sign that traditional lore was being passed along. Also, he describes some of the ways in which folklore was transmitted: through "long yarns" and "equally long disputes." Time spent in the fo'c'sle thus helped Dana become a member of the folk group. For Dana, these experiences remained a part of his character long after he had given up seafaring. Massachusetts statesman Henry Adams, who knew Dana in the late-1840s, twelve years after Dana retired from the sea, described his appearance and character:

> [H]e affected to be still before the mast, a direct, rather bluff, vigorous seaman, and only as one got to know him better one found the man of rather excessive refinement trying with success to work like a day-laborer, deliberately hardening his skin to the burden, as though he were still carrying hides at Monterey...he forced himself to take life as it came, and he suffocated his longings with grim self-discipline, by mere force of will (Adams 1961: 29-30).

Adams's description of Dana's traits, such as bluffness, hardening oneself against the elements, and taking life as it came are characteristics which marked men in the maritime folk group. The fact that Dana was still trying to employ these characteristics more than a decade after returning from the sea shows how deeply such characteristics became imbued in members of the maritime folk group.

Alfred Lubbock, however, did not enjoy the benefits of the fo'c'sle during his voyage on the *Royalshire*. Upon signing aboard, Lubbock first berthed in the fo'c'sle. Because all of the common sailors had deserted, he originally only shared the fo'c'sle with Don Henderson, another Englishman who had signed aboard at the same time (Lubbock 1948: 14). After a couple of weeks, Lubbock and Henderson were allowed

to move to the half-deck, a compartment just under the break of the poop. Because the half-deck was located closer to the stern, Lubbock and Henderson thought that they were being promoted. The move later turned out to be a double-edge sword, for the half-deck was the wettest place aboard ship during any type of storm (Lubbock 1948: 92). During the months spent in the high south latitudes, which are known for constant violent storms, Lubbock mentions many times when the half-deck became partially filled with water. He and his companions spent many miserable, wet nights shivering in the half-deck as the *Royalshire* approached Cape Horn. Meanwhile, the older, wiser Able Bodied seaman, who had taken up residence in the forecastle, managed to stay much drier. This appears to be an example of the folk group excluding neophytes from their ranks until a period of initiation had passed.

Aboard Royal Navy warships, the living situation was somewhat different. Warships carried many more crewmen than merchant vessels, so it was not possible for all of the sailors to berth in the fo'c'sle. Instead, the crew aboard warships was typically divided into groups, termed "messes," of six to eight men. Members of a mess slept, ate, worked, and fought closely together. Because the cramped confines of a warship necessitated good relations among seamen, it was customary for the men to choose their own messmates. This was usually done at the beginning of a cruise. Veteran sailors formed themselves into messes with their friends. Any newcomers would have to be accepted into a mess by the older hands, based on whether or not the veterans thought they could get along with the neophyte. The organization of the mess

was so important to life in the Royal Navy that the traditional term for the death of a

sailor was that he had "lost the number of his mess."

Like the fo'c'sle aboard merchant ships, the messes aboard a warship provided

a context for the transmission of folklore. Sam Noble, like Dana, mentions that

"yarns" were often swapped while the men were gathered together as a mess. Stories

were told in the mess at mealtime, or when messmates sat around mending clothes. In

addition to telling their own tales, the men liked to read stories and novels to one

another. According to Noble (1925: 244),

> What we liked best were love yarns – not too spooney – something with a
> sailor-man as the hero; the heroine a nice little girl in a cottage on a cliff,
> waiting for him to come home and be married. But she had to be True Blue. If
> she were shifty or flighty or featherheaded – take her away! While if there
> were too much "slush" in the story somebody flung a wet swab at the reader
> and knocked his candle out.

This passage illustrates some of the values held by sailors as a folk group. As

men often far from home for long periods of time, they suffered from anxiety that their

wives and sweethearts might cheat on them or desert them. Thus, they liked women

who were "True Blue." In addition, the fact that the sailors preferred love stories hints

at the romantic nature of seamen, as well as the loneliness caused by months or years

of isolation at sea.

Foodlore

Food preservation technology was still in its infancy in the Age of Sail, so the

range of foods available for long voyages was extremely limited. Vessels generally

acquired fresh produce at every port of call, but fresh provisions would not last for

many days at sea. For everyday fare, sailors relied upon ship's biscuit, a type of hard bread that could last in bags for years. The biscuit was so hard that sailors had to soften it in water in order to avoid cracking their teeth. For meat, crews were fed salted beef that was stored in barrels, sometimes for years on end. The beef was so saturated with salt that it had to be soaked in tubs for hours to make it palatable. Even then, the beef came out so dry and leathery that seamen customarily referred to it as "salt horse." Dried peas and oatmeal, both of which preserved well, served as additional staples of the mariner's diet (Lavery 1989: 204-206; Rodger 1996: 82-87).

Because the fo'c'sle and mess served as the sailors' eating places, they provided the context for food-related folklore. Much of the lore surrounding sailors' diets focused on the poor quality of the food. Ship's biscuit was typically infested with weevils, which sailors termed "bargemen" after the shape of the tray in which the bread was served. Stories abound concerning weevils big enough to carry bread away by themselves. According to Sam Noble (1925: 87), "I've actually seen a man lay down a piece of biscuit to explain a point to a mate with whom he was arguing, and when he turned to take up the biscuit again it had wandered to another part of the table!" Claims such as this are so common that they must have been passed along from sailor to sailor.

In addition to weevils, cockroaches were a common sight around the mess table:

> They dropped from the beams flop into your basin or plate while you sat at meals, and this happened so often that you came to think nothing of it – just fished them out and left them wriggling on the table. If they made to run away,

you just brought your spoon down whack upon them and went on with your dinner.

I am sure we must have eaten hundreds of them in the dark. It was nothing unusual for a man to spring up and howl – "Oh, Lord; I've swallowed a cockroach!" and somebody else to cry: "Give the poor thing a drink!"

They got so plentiful that we used to count our catches at every meal. A man would have six or seven ranged along the rim of his plate and would say: "There's my little bag for this adventure." (Noble 1925: 164).

This passage illustrates one of the major values of sailors as a folk group: enduring hardship without complaint. Instead of being completely disgusted by the bugs crawling in their food, the men made a game of it. Another of Noble's stories illustrates this same value. One day, the men were given a particularly rancid portion of salt beef. The crew formed as a body and took the beef aft to the captain's quarters to complain. The captain listened to their story, then had his steward show the men his own meal. It turned out that the captain was eating the same vile beef as the sailors. Once Noble and his mates saw this, they dropped their complaints and ate the beef. As long as the captain, who was in this case highly respected, was willing to share the same disgusting food, the crew ate it without complaint (Noble 1925: 119-121). Richard Henry Dana makes the same point: "whatever your feelings may be, you must make a joke of everything at sea; and if you were to fall from aloft and be caught in the belly of a sail, and thus saved from instant death, it would not do to look at all disturbed, or to make a serious matter of it" (Dana 1986: 26). Dana's statement implies that to complain would lessen one's stature in the eyes of other sailors.

While the folk group frowned upon those who complained without reason, sailors expected to be treated fairly. If their sense of fairness was harmed, sailors felt justified in complaining, as the following foodlore items indicate. It was customary on

sailing ships to serve the men a treat on Sundays and holidays. This was traditionally

plum duff, a sweet concoction made from mixing raisins, currants, or dried plums with

pounded up ship's biscuit. Plum duff was served with molasses to make it even

sweeter. Crews looked forward to their weekly allowance of duff, and would complain

bitterly if it were denied. For example, aboard the *Pilgrim*, Dana and his shipmates

once threatened rebellion because the cook did not give them enough molasses with

their duff on Christmas day (Dana 1986: 41).

 In the Royal Navy, it was traditional to give sailors alcohol with their noon

meal. This custom dated back to the sixteenth century. During that time, King Henry

VIII recognized the necessity of provisioning his ships with beer, and even established

breweries in coastal cities to supply the fleet. Food regulations from 1570 stated that

each man was to receive a gallon of beer per day while at sea (Hattendorf 1993: 102).

This measure became the standard issue in the English navy over the next several

hundred years. When beer was not available, other types of alcohol were substituted.

The *Regulations and Instructions Relating to His Majesty's Service at Sea*, first issued

in 1731 (hereafter referred to as the 1731 *Regulations*), lists substitutes for beer. A pint

of rum, or half a pint of brandy, wine, or arrack was considered the equivalent of one

gallon of beer (Lavery 1998: 18). Other than beer, all of the alcohol was mixed with

water in order to render it less intoxicating and make it harder for men to hoard a

supply for a drinking binge. The term "grog" was originally applied to the mixture of

rum and water, which became the customary drink in the West Indies due to the

plentiful supply of rum. Over time, grog became the standard term for all of the

alcoholic mixtures served aboard Royal Navy warships.

Officers sought to limit how much alcohol reached the hands of sailors, as well

as where and when it was consumed. The 1731 *Regulations* ordered that seamen be

placed in irons if they were found guilty of drunkenness. Officers were only fined two

day's pay for the same offense (Lavery 1998: 15). Flogging was also a common

punishment for those found drunk. Despite these consequences, drunkenness remained

a persistent problem in the English navy. The punishment list of HMS *Blake* shows

that more men were punished for being drunk than for any other crime. Of the 187

men punished between 1811 and 1812, 119 were punished for "drunkenness" or

"repeated drunkenness" (Lavery 1998: 409-416).

Despite its damaging effects, the Royal Navy was obliged to serve a daily

ration of grog because the sailors expected it. If denied their grog, sailors might resort

to work slowdowns, sabotage, or outright mutiny. Grog thus provides an excellent

example of how the wishes of a folk group can sometimes overcome the desires of the

ruling elite.

Working Aloft

One context in which neophytes learned how to become members of the folk

group was through work activities. Working aloft, among the rigging, was a unique

and dangerous task that set sailors apart from other occupations. It is not surprising,

therefore, that working aloft provided one of the main contexts for the transmission of traditional knowledge.

As might be expected, much of the traditional information passed along while working aloft concerned practical aspects of seamanship. On the *Pilgrim*'s first night on the open Atlantic, a storm blew up, and Dana was called on deck to assist with the sails. Dana had no clear idea what he was supposed to do, but he was ordered aloft to help reef the topsails. Going aloft for the first time was always a risky undertaking for a new seaman, but in this case the danger was compounded by the darkness and the storm. Nevertheless, Dana followed the other men of his watch aloft, clambered with them out onto the yard, and did his best to mimic their actions in reefing the sail (Dana 1986: 6-7). In this instance, no one gave him any instructions; he was simply expected to watch the others and do what they did. As the weeks went by, the more experienced hands taught him the finer points of working in the rigging. This was done in a completely informal manner, with no written texts or formal training sessions.

Nevertheless, the other members of the folk group managed to pass along their seamanship skills, so that Dana was soon competent at working with sails. About six weeks after his first experience reefing topsails on a stormy night, Dana encountered the true power of an Atlantic gale. Once again, he was ordered aloft, but by this time he was much more skillful. The gale was far more powerful than the earlier storm, but Dana had no trouble going aloft. He no longer had to watch others to understand what he was supposed to do, and as he says, "I could knot my reef-point as well as anybody"

(Dana 1986: 19). He was so comfortable working aloft that he thought nothing of sliding down the shrouds and backstays to regain the deck (Dana 1986: 20).

In addition to practical aspects of seamanship, newcomers also learned other aspects of a sailors' life while working aloft. Lubbock first went aloft while the *Royalshire* lay anchored in San Francisco Bay, so unlike Dana he did not have to deal with a heaving sea during his initial experience in the rigging. Although he found clinging to the rigging difficult at first, Lubbock (1948: 59) states that he was completely at home within an hour. As the days went by, Lubbock learned more about working aloft, but he also learned the sailors' vocabulary. In his words, "the language used up aloft was a revelation to me; never had I heard such thundery and hair-curling expressions before, not even in an American mining camp" (Lubbock 1948: 58). From this description, it appears that working in the rigging provided the context for new sailors to learn some of the more colorful expressions of the folk group, such as cursing.

Nicknames

Sailors utilized many traditional nicknames. "Jack" or "Jack Tar" was the customary name for any sailor. Many nicknames originated from the task a sailor performed. For example, on Royal Navy warships "Jemmy Ducks" was the traditional nickname for the crewman who took care of the ship's poultry. Similarly, "Sails" was the customary term for the sailmaker, while the carpenter was known as "Chips" and the cooper as "Bungs" (Flannery ed. 1999: 46). Noble (1925: 15) records "Dusty" as

the traditional name for the bread room boy. A common term for young boys just entering sea life was "nipper," which had its origins in the process of weighing an anchor. Aboard wooden sailing ships, the anchor was raised by turning the capstan. Anchor cables, however, were too large to wrap around the capstan. Instead, a smaller cable, called a "messenger," ran in a continuous loop from the capstan to rollers near the bow of the vessel. Nippers were ropes used to attach the anchor cable to the messenger. As the crew turned the capstan, the messenger traveled aft, bringing the attached anchor cable along with it. As the anchor cable approached the capstan, the nipper was removed and carried forward, to be reattached again (Lever 1998: 109). Hauling on the capstan was a job for strong men, but boys were suitable for handling the nippers, from which came the term "little nipper." Lubbock (1948: 7) records this name in use aboard the *Royalshire*. Other nicknames were assigned based on physical characteristics or place of birth. One man aboard the *Royalshire* was known as "Scar" due to a prominent mark on his face (Lubbock 1948: 310). Noble was referred to as "Jock," a traditional English name for Scottish men. Due largely to lack of economic opportunities in their native land, many Scotsmen served in the Royal Navy, so there were always plenty of "Jocks," "Sandys," and "Macs" aboard any given ship (Noble 1925: 130).

Such nicknames functioned to bring the folk group closer together. The occupation of seaman was a highly mobile life, and sailors often changed ships many times in their careers. Sometimes, a man might find himself serving on a vessel of a different nationality, such as Englishman Lubbock aboard the American *Royalshire*. In

these cases, the traditional nicknames helped provide a sense of familiarity when a sailor went aboard a new ship. No matter where a sailor went, he would be sure to find Sails, Chips, Jocks, and many other familiar monikers. This seems to be an illustration of the tight-knit nature of sailors as a folk group.

Idling on Deck

Although sailing a ship and keeping it in good repair required constant attention, life at sea was not all work. Sailors found time to relax, and the folklore associated with leisure activities expresses values of the folk group. The importance of the fo'c'sle and the mess to the life of a sailor has already been discussed, and these two locations provided one of the major contexts for leisure related lore. When the weather was nice, however, sailors preferred to spend their leisure time on deck. The hours from four to eight in the evening, after the last meal of the day but before the night watch began, were traditionally a period of idleness aboard sailing vessels. Evening free time was spent in a variety of activities, as this scene aboard the *Pilgrim* shows:

> The captain is up, walking on the weather side of the quarter-deck, the chief mate on the lee side, and the second mate about the weather gangway. The steward has finished his work in the cabin, and has come up to smoke his pipe with the cook in the galley. The crew are sitting on the windlass or lying on the forecastle, smoking, singing, or telling long yarns. At eight o'clock, eight bells are struck, the log is hove, the watch set, the wheel relieved, the galley shut up, and the other watch goes below (Dana 1986: 11-12).

Like Dana, Alfred Lubbock spent many hours singing and storytelling with his mates on deck: "The most enjoyable part of the day is the second dog watch, when in

the cool of the evening we sit on the after-hatch spinning yarns and singing songs"

(Lubbock 1948: 310).

Leisure activities in the Royal Navy did not occur only during the evening

hours. Thursday was the traditional day for mending clothes, and if the weather was

nice the men would bring their sewing up on deck. As recorded by Noble (1925: 178),

this context provided a forum for other activities as well:

> We were under steam, and Thursday being make-and-mend-clothes day, the
> deck was pretty lively. Some of the fellows were sewing, others netting
> window-curtains, making daisy mats, or pictures worked in wool upon
> stretched canvas – Darby Kelly had one finished of a ship in full sail which you
> could hardly have told at a distance from an oil painting – some writing letters
> home, and all chatting away meanwhile.

Leisure time provided a context for the men to come together to tell the stories

and sing the songs that affirmed the sailors' identity as a distinctive group.

Maritime Communities

Although the work environment and social life aboard ship were integral to the

seafaring experience during the Age of Sail, seaport communities also formed part of

the maritime folk group. In order to understand the totality of life in an occupational

folk group, it is necessary to study not only the workplace environment but also the

total community in which members of the group interact. For example, in his study of

the logger folk group, Toelken (1996: 75-76) stresses the need to examine picnics,

festivals, weddings, and other community events that serve as stages for the

performance of logger folklore. Also, listening to the voices of wives, families, and

other community members provides a deeper and more meaningful view of the folk

group. For this reason, study of the maritime folk group would not be complete

without some understanding of the network of family and ancillary occupations ashore.

Keeping a ship seaworthy required the services of many ancillary occupations.

In seaports, shipwrights, sailmakers, and dockyard workers, among others, built and

maintained vessels. In many cases, seaport workers were former sailors. John Nicol,

for instance, served aboard ship as a cooper for twenty-five years before retiring to

pursue the same occupation in his native Edinburgh (Flannery ed. 1999: 183-185).

Other occupations, such as tavernkeepers, boarding house owners, and prostitutes,

provided services to the sailors themselves. Some of these people helped sailors, while

others wanted nothing more than to relieve them of their hard-earned money. When

ashore, sailors knew that they had to be constantly on the lookout for scoundrels, and

they valued honesty. When in London, John Nicol always boarded at the house of a

fellow countrymen, "as honest a man as ever lived" (Flannery ed. 1999: 154).

American sailor Jacob Nagle found a similarly honest landlord. On his first visit to

Plymouth, a shipmate persuaded Nagle to accompany him to a public house for

refreshment, even though Nagle had no money. After several drinks, the shipmate

slipped away, leaving Nagle with the bill. The landlord trusted him enough to let him

go in search of other shipmates to borrow money from, and even loaned Nagle money

until his ship was paid off (Dann ed. 1988: 68-69).

Honest people such as these existed, but a sailor had to be constantly on his

guard. Thieves roamed port towns, ready to pick a seaman's pocket or split his head

open with a cudgel in order to steal his money. Primary accounts show that sailors

particularly distrusted prostitutes. In Jamaica, Samuel Kelly was sent ashore by the master to sell buckles, shoes, and other goods. During the course of this he found himself in an uncomfortable situation:

> I at length was accosted by an old seaman, who informed me that if I would follow him, he would show me a house where I could make sales. I immediately embraced the offer, and he conducted me to a house near the church, and on entering the door I perceived several women dressed very gaudily, and not liking their appearance, I began to wish myself safe back into the street, but not wishing to give offence, I put the best face on the business and took out a piece or two of coloured riband, which I was determined to ask an enormous price for, but to my great surprise they gave me my price, and having secured the money, I was encouraged to go forward (though they were common prostitutes), and made a good morning's work. I then left the house and in the street, meeting another of our lads with silk stockings on sale, I supposed they would be acceptable to my late customers, and accordingly took him with me, where, he also made sales, keeping a good look for fear of pilferage (Garstin ed. 1925: 32-33).

The last line clearly reveals Kelly's belief that prostitutes would rob a sailor if given the chance. Such beliefs were often justified. While in London, Jacob Nagle came across a shipmate who had been robbed by a prostitute after she made him intoxicated. The clever Nagle devised a plan to turn the tables. Nagle met the same woman in a tavern, and pretended to drink heavily. After judging him to be drunk enough, she invited him to her room:

> We went to hur room. She said I better go to bed. I told hur I wanted a pot of phlip and then I would go to bed. She agreed to that, thinking if I was not drunk enough she would make me so. I gave hur a shilling. She went for the flip. I took the candel and over hall'd the bricks in the firehath. I found one loose in the second teer, in the back of the chimble; I lifted it up and saw some gold, and a watch, put the brick in its place (Dann ed. 1988: 156).

Having found her hiding place, Nagle undressed and pretended to pass out in a drunken stupor. In the night, the woman began rummaging through his clothes. The

next morning, Nagle sent her to fetch him a drink. While she was gone, he removed

the money and other loot from their cache. After having his morning drink, Nagle

slipped away, leaving the prostitute to discover that she had been robbed. Later in the

day, Nagle and another shipmate paid her a visit, with the shipmate pretending to be a

constable. Under questioning, she tearfully admitted her thievery. Having caught her

in the act, Nagle returned everything except the money that she had stolen from him

and his shipmate. The two became friends, and even took tea together. The

experiences of Kelly and Nagle provide a small glimpse into the complex relationships

between sailors and prostitutes.

Wives and families back home also formed a vital part of the maritime world.

Unfortunately, few studies have examined this vital component of the maritime folk

group. Early maritime scholarship (e.g., Wallace 1924) viewed maritime wives as

static and passive, waiting anxiously for their men to return from the sea (Creighton

and Norling 1996: vii). Recent studies stress the importance of wives to maritime life.

Norling's *Captain Ahab Had a Wife: New England Women and the Whalefishery,*

1720-1870 (2000), one of the best recent studies on maritime wives, demonstrates the

importance of women for managing household affairs while their husbands were away.

"Cape Horn widows," whose husbands might be at sea for three or more years at a

time, had to be independent and self-sufficient in order to deal with the difficulties of

managing a family by themselves.

While ashore, sailors navigated through a complex web of professional and

personal relationships. A life as a sailor meant being a stranger in foreign ports,

sometimes amid people who spoke a different language. Shore leave offered

opportunities for recreation and earthly pleasures, which sailors were quick to indulge

in. But the land had dangers as well. If he were not careful, a sailor could easily fall

prey to robbers, scoundrels, or murderers that prowled the streets of seaport towns.

Boisterous and seedy, exciting and dangerous, seaports formed a core sphere of

interaction for members of the maritime folk group.

Summary

Without a doubt, seamen in the Age of Sail formed a distinctive folk group,

with customs that were passed around from ship to ship and nation to nation. A

number of similar traditions were present aboard English and American vessels, as

evidenced by similarities in the accounts quoted.

Several contexts for traditional folk interaction have been identified. One of the

most important was the living quarters, whether it was the fo'c'sle of an American brig

or the mess on the gundeck of a British warship. Sailors also transmitted traditional

information while working in the rigging. The open air of the main deck provided a

place for sailors to build and maintain their group identity. Finally, maritime

communities represent a largely unexplored part of the seafaring world.

Most importantly, some of the folk group's collective values have also been

identified. Sailors were extremely independent. They were also self-sufficient, as

evidenced, for example, by their ability to make and mend their own clothes. Despite

their sense of independence and close confinement with others of their folk group,

sailors were often lonely, pining for sweethearts or family members ashore. Yet

another group value was the ability to endure hardship without complaint. Whether it

was cockroaches in their food, or a man refusing to cry out while his leg was

amputated (Robinson 1973: 115), sailors tried to accept their fate stoically. As will be

seen in the following chapters, these and other group values were expressed in the

memorials that sailors and other members of maritime communities erected to

commemorate their dead.

CHAPTER IV

THE 2002 MARITIME MEMORIALS SURVEY

The primary dataset for this dissertation consists of 412 maritime memorials recorded during surveys in England and the United States in the summer of 2002. This chapter describes the survey methodology and fieldwork locations. Chapter 5 provides an overview of the data, while interpretations will be presented in the chapters that follow.

Background Research

As discussed in the previous chapter, England, her American colonies, and later the United States developed important maritime cultures during the age of sail. Hundreds of communities, ranging from large port cities to small fishing villages, were involved in seafaring. Likewise, England and America produced millions of mariners who ranged across the globe. Given the scale of maritime activity in these regions, it would be impossible to survey all of the seafaring centers of England and America. For this reason, background research involving consultation of printed sources and internet resources was used to determine the best places to find extant maritime memorials. From this research a cross-section of survey locations was chosen based on the desire to visit sites associated with the major maritime occupations (naval, merchant shipping, whaling, and fishing), and the limitations of time and available funding. In all, a total of seven cities in England and nine in the United States were visited (Figures 2 and 3). Each city contained one or more churchyards
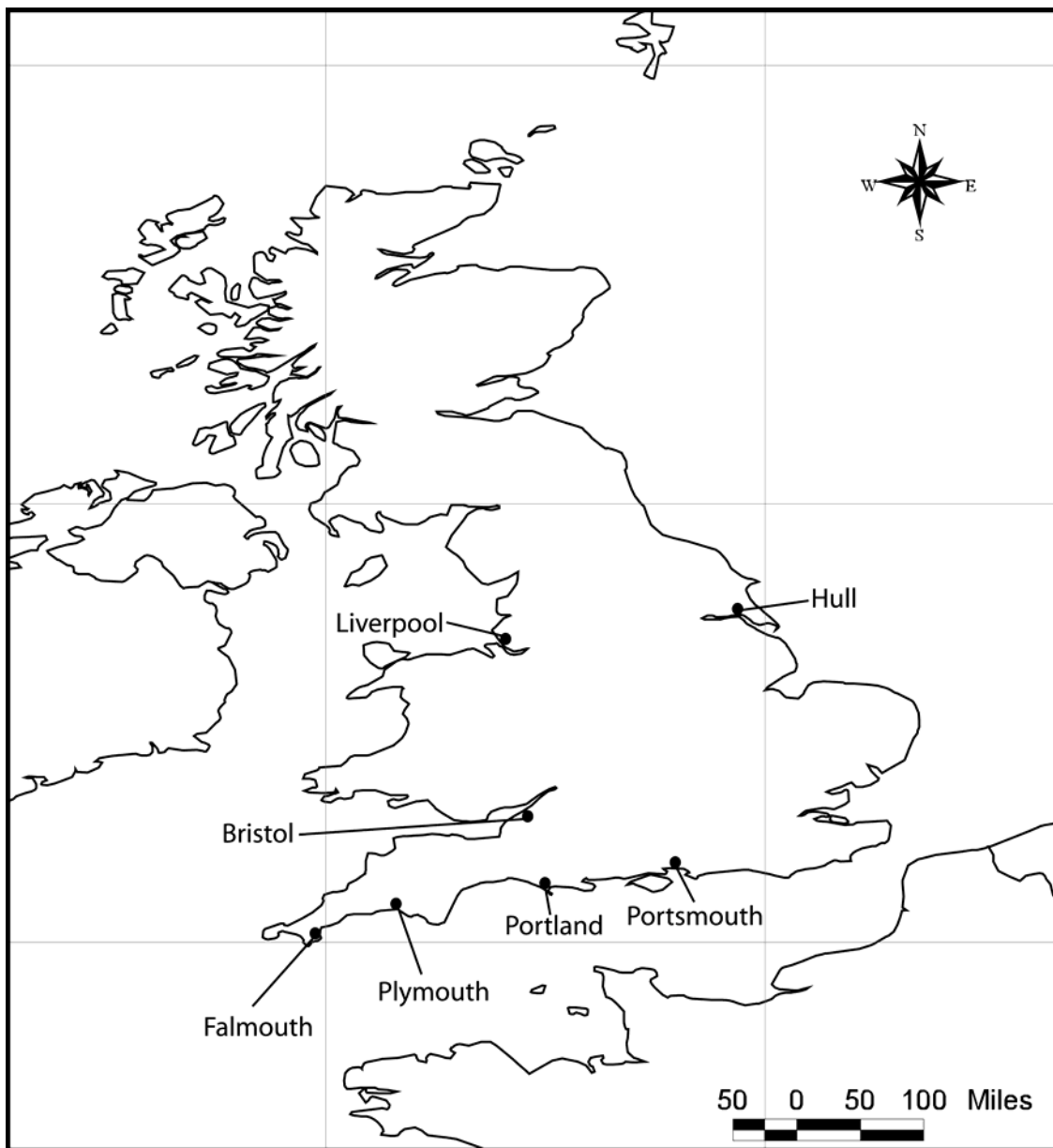
Figure 2. Map of survey locations in England.
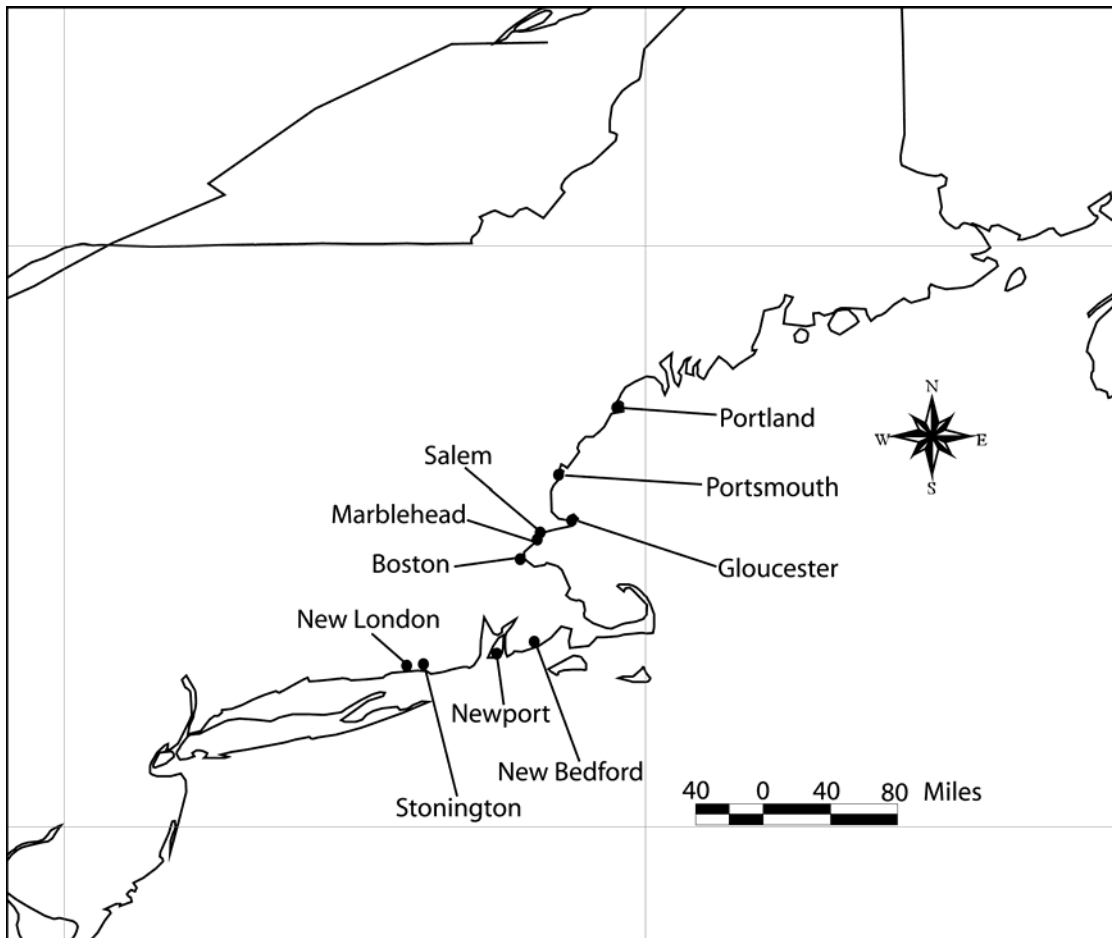
Figure 3. Map of survey locations in the United States.

and cemeteries, so that a total of 31 sites in England and 21 in the United States were actually surveyed.

Survey Methodology

The first step at each survey location was to conduct a preliminary reconnaissance to determine the numbers and condition of maritime memorials present. The next step was to decide which memorials to record. An attempt was made to record a representative cross-section of the maritime memorials present in any given cemetery. However, this was a subjective decision based on information noted in the reconnaissance. For this reason, the numbers of memorials recorded at each location should not be considered as representative of the importance of each site as a seafaring center. For example, small sites with good preservation, such as Stonington, Connecticut, produced more memorials than large seaports such as Bristol.

Memorials were recorded using a standard form based on guidelines from Jones (1979), the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments (RCHM) in England, and the Association for Gravestone Studies (AGS) in the United States (Figure 4). The use of a standardized form resulted in the collection of some data that was not considered pertinent to the present study. However, the employment of a conventional format for data collection will make it possible for future studies to use the material collected by the survey. In addition to the record form, each memorial was photographed using standard 35 mm film. An overall photograph of each memorial was taken, along with

Date of Recording: _____		Record #: _____

Site Information

State: _____	County: _____
Municipality: _____	Cemetery: _____
USGS 7.5' x 7.5' Map: _____	
Latitude: _____	Longitude: _____

Physical Features

Type: ❑ Monument   ❑ Grave   ❑ Other: _____

Form: _____

Material: _____

Orientation: _____ Topographic Situation: _____

Condition: _____

Inscription & Imagery

Date of Monument: _____ No. of people commemorated: _____

Technique of Inscription: _____

Inscribed Faces (compass points): _____

Condition of Inscription: _____

Imagery: _____

Other Features
or Notes: _____

Photographic Record

Roll #: _____	Negative #s: _____
Roll #:	Negative #s:

Figure 4. Memorial Record Form used in New England. The inscription was recorded on the back of the form.

additional photographs of any interesting details such as imagery and inscriptions. Finally, supplementary information about each site was recorded in a field notebook.

After the completion of fieldwork, each memorial record was entered into a Microsoft Access database to create a permanent electronic record of the survey. All photographs and negatives were catalogued and stored in acid-free albums. Photographs were also scanned to create a digital record. In the future, it is planned to make both the memorial record database and the photographic record available to other interested researchers.

Survey Locations in England

Portsmouth

It would be hard to find any seaport more closely associated with the Royal Navy than Portsmouth. The advantages of this area were recognized at least as far back as the Roman period, when a fortress was built at nearby Portchester to guard part of the harbor. In 1540, Henry VIII ordered the construction of warehouses at Portsmouth, which paved the way for an already active seaport to become the most important naval center in southern England. Spithead, a sheltered anchorage lying between the city and the Isle of Wight, was large enough to accommodate hundreds of vessels at a time. Portsmouth remains a major Royal Navy base to this day, and the city's atmosphere reflects its naval heritage. The city is home to the Royal Navy Museum, Nelson's flagship HMS *Victory*, HMS *Warrior*, Britain's first iron warship,

and the Tudor warship *Mary Rose*, Henry VIII's flagship that foundered in the Solent in 1545.

As might be expected, maritime memorials are abundant in Portsmouth. A monument commemorating sailors who lost their lives in both world wars stands on Southsea Common. Along the waterfront nearby, a series of obelisks erected by nineteenth-century seamen memorialize their shipmates who died on voyages around the globe. In addition to these very publicly placed monuments, the churchyards and cemeteries around Portsmouth provide a more complete memorial to thousands of seafarers who sailed from this port over the last several centuries.

As is common with urban areas of Britain, the majority of churches within the city limits of Portsmouth no longer possess churchyards with extant tombstones. By the early nineteenth century, English churchyards had become so overcrowded that there was no longer sufficient room to inter new bodies. It was also feared that the vast numbers of decaying corpses were creating health problems for those living and working in the vicinity of churches. Due to these concerns, most urban churchyards were cleared of gravestones and converted into parks during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The church of St. Mary's Portsea, for example, was described by Nicol (1911) as possessing a churchyard full of gravestones, many of which were dedicated to mariners. Today, the churchyard has been almost completely cleared. Some of the gravestones that were removed are stacked along the perimeter of the churchyard, although these are highly weathered and mostly unreadable. The interior of the church, however, still preserves many wall plaques that commemorate mariners.

At one time there were more, but according to the verger, "we had to take a lot of them down because they were cluttering up the walls too much." Of the wall plaques that remain, most were dedicated by Royal Navy ship crews after returning from commissions. They commemorate those shipmates who lost their lives during the cruise. Typically, the name and position aboard ship of each deceased shipmate are recorded.

Although all of the churchyards within the city of Portsmouth have been cleared, several churches in smaller villages around the city still have theirs. As might be expected from such a maritime region, a number of these contain memorials to seamen. Unfortunately, gravestones in the Portsmouth area were commonly made from a form of limestone that weathers easily. The elements have rendered many eighteenth century stones unreadable. The churchyard of St. Mary's in Alverstoke, for example, is crowded with eighteenth century gravestones, but few of these can now be read. Still, the survey did record two eighteenth-century maritime gravestones at this church. Several eighteenth-century gravestones with ship depictions were recorded at the churchyards of St. Mary at South Hayling and St. Thomas à Becket at Warblington. Despite the problem of weathering, these were the best eighteenth-century ship representations discovered by the survey. The church of St. Mary at Portchester, located next to the harbor within the grounds of the Norman castle, was reported by Nicol (1911) to contain many naval monuments. Survey revealed, however, that a substantial amount of clearing must have taken place since Nicol's time, as few maritime memorials exist at the church today. Nevertheless, the church remains a

focus for mariners to some extent, as evidenced by the grave of a sailor from HMS *Sheffield*, killed during the Falklands War of 1982. Its inscription dedicates the monument to all of those who died during this conflict.

With the closing of urban churchyards, English cities began constructing cemeteries on the outskirts of towns, away from the crowded city centers. In Portsmouth, Kingston Cemetery and Highland Road Cemetery were founded in the 1850s to serve the city's burial needs. Both of these cemeteries contain numerous excellent maritime memorials from the mid-nineteenth through the twentieth centuries. At Kingston Cemetery, several monuments dedicated by Royal Navy crews memorialize lost comrades. These typically take the form of obelisks like those along the Portsmouth seawall. In addition to these group monuments, both Kingston and Highland Road contain many graves of naval personnel and merchant mariners. Representations of anchors are common on these monuments.

In addition to civilian cemeteries, the Portsmouth area also contains a naval cemetery. The Royal Navy cemetery at Haslar, which opened in the 1850s, was one of the earliest purpose-built cemeteries for seamen. This beautifully landscaped cemetery, situated next to the waters of a tidal creek, is well maintained and is still in use today. The cemetery provides excellent insight into the changes in Royal Navy commemorative practices over the last 150 years. The earliest memorials from the mid-nineteenth century feature a great deal of individuality, with much variety in their shapes and the wording of inscriptions. The forms utilized are often those typical in civilian cemeteries. The majority of memorials have depictions of anchors, while ship

depictions are practically nonexistent. There are a number of obelisks dedicated by individual ship's crews from the 1850s to the 1870s. In form these are virtually identical to the ones along the Portsmouth seawall and at Kingston Cemetery.

By the 1880s, the Royal Navy had begun to use standardized tombstones. The earliest form noted was rectangular in shape with a semicircular section at the top. Inscriptions consisted simply of the stock phrase "In Memory of", followed by the name, ship or rank, date of death, and age. Other than anchors, which are common, no other illustrations were present on these stones. Around the beginning of the twentieth century, another standardized form came into use. This consists of a cross made of concrete with a bronze plaque in the center that records the same details as the earlier type discussed above. The third standardized form entered use in the mid-twentieth century and became the norm for sailor's graves during World War II. The top of this type is rounded, and the upper part typically contains a depiction of an anchor. The inscription records the name, rank, service number, ship name, and date of death. In addition to the formulaic details, many of these stones also feature a phrase near the bottom. Most of those noted were quotes from the Bible, although some were from poetry. This form of gravestone was also used by other branches of the British military during the Second World War, and is the standard British military form today.

Portland

Portland consists of a peninsula jutting out from England's southern coast, roughly midway between Plymouth and Portsmouth. The prominent topographic

situation of the peninsula made it useful as a navigational landmark for vessels passing along the southern coast. Although described by Jenkins (1999: 159) as "an appendix of Dorset left to the mercy of the philistine Royal Navy," Portland was also involved in coastal and international trade and fishing. Portland's development as a seaport was aided by the construction of a sheltered anchorage on the northern side of the peninsula in the mid-nineteenth century. However, the Portland Race, a strong current passing between the peninsula and a sandbank to the southeast, made the waters around Portland extremely dangerous for sailing craft. Over the centuries hundreds of wooden vessels were destroyed on the rocks of Portland and the surrounding coast. The churchyards and cemeteries around Portland reflect both its seafaring heritage and the tragedies that have taken place there.

Portland St. George, located high atop the cliffs that make up the western side of the peninsula, represents one of the most interesting maritime churches in the area. Built in the 1750s, Portland St. George contains a large churchyard that continued to be used for burials until the mid-twentieth century. Although highly overgrown with vegetation today, the churchyard contains many well-preserved eighteenth and nineteenth century maritime memorials. The excellent preservation is due mainly to the use of Portland stone, a very hard form of limestone that is still quarried on Portland today for use as a building material.

The ruins of St. Andrew's church, which lie on the eastern side of the peninsula, were also visited. St. Andrew's was the earliest church on Portland, dating back to the eleventh or twelfth century. The church went out of use in the eighteenth century and

today lies in ruins. It was hoped that its churchyard might still contain extant maritime

memorials from the early 1700s. Unfortunately, however, this hope was not realized.

The churchyard does contain several well-preserved seventeenth- and eighteenth-

century gravestones featuring death's heads, but none of these appear to be maritime

gravestones.

Like Portsmouth, Portland is also home to a Royal Navy cemetery, located near

the village of Fortuneswell on the northern side of the peninsula. The cemetery is

situated on the slopes of a hill, overlooking Portland Harbor to the north. This

cemetery seems to be more recent than the one near Haslar. The earliest grave noted

was from 1885. There are many late nineteenth- and twentieth-century standardized

Royal Navy gravestones of the same types described from the cemetery at Haslar.

While the standardized gravestones form the bulk of memorials at the Fortuneswell

cemetery, some gravestones consist of more elaborate forms, including crosses and

anchors. In addition, a few gravestones are shaped like those in civilian cemeteries.

The final location surveyed in the Portland area was All Saint's church in the

village of Wyke Regis, which lies on the mainland several miles north of Portland

peninsula. All Saints' was chosen for survey because Spinney (1987) mentioned the

presence of maritime memorials in the church. The interior of the church itself

contains several maritime memorials, including that of Admiral Marriott Arbuthnot,

who commanded Royal Navy forces in North American waters during part of the

American War for Independence. Outside, the churchyard, while no longer used for

burials, still contains several maritime gravestones.

Plymouth

Famous as the port from which the *Mayflower* set sail for the New World in 1620, Plymouth was known for many different aspects of seafaring. Like many West Country ports, Plymouth was infamous for smuggling and piracy, in addition to more prosaic occupations such as trade and fishing. In 1693 William I established a Royal Navy dockyard at Devonport on the River Tamar. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when France was Britain's main enemy at sea, Plymouth served as an important Royal Navy base due to its location in the West Country, close to France, the English Channel, and Atlantic shipping routes (Lavery 1989: 234). The city is still home to the dockyard and navy base.

Evidence of the maritime past is abundant in Plymouth. On top of Plymouth Hoe, the hill overlooking the harbor, a statue of Sir Francis Drake stands on the spot where he supposedly finished a game of bowls before sallying out to challenge the Spanish Armada. Nearby, a Royal Navy memorial identical to those at Portsmouth and Chatham commemorates those who died during World War I and World War II. The city's maritime heritage is also recalled in popular culture: one can visit the Armada Shops or have a pint in any one of a number of pubs with nautical names. Founded in 1793, the Plymouth Gin distillery, whose spirits became common aboard Royal Navy ships, still distills "Navy Strength" gin today.

Due to churchyard clearing and extensive German bombing during World War II, few early maritime memorials exist within the city of Plymouth. The church of St. Andrews maintains a monument to William Henry Allen, an American naval officer

killed during the War of 1812. Allen, commander of the United States brig *Argus*, died in Plymouth from wounds received when his vessel was captured by HMS *Pelican* in August 1813. He was buried in St. Andrew's churchyard. When the churchyard was cleared, Allen's tombstone was preserved. A century later, the National Society of United States Daughters of 1812 arranged for the tombstone to be mounted next to the door of the Priest's House, the oldest building remaining at the church. They also erected a plaque thanking the British people for their respectful treatment of Allen's remains (Northan 1976). It still serves as the site for a remembrance ceremony every Memorial Day, and, according to one church employee, was also the focus of a prayer service following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

As at Portsmouth, most of the remaining eighteenth and nineteenth century maritime memorials at Plymouth are located at suburban churches that escaped Victorian restoration efforts and German bombs. Two such churches exist in the village of Plympton, a few miles to the east of Plymouth. The church of St. Mary, the foundations of which date back to the twelfth century, once sat on the banks of the River Plym. Although the river has long since been filled in and the land built over, St. Mary's connection to the sea is still remembered in church tradition. According to the sexton, travelers came to St. Mary's to pray for a safe voyage before embarking aboard ships to emigrate to the New World. The use of a church situated on the water to pray for safe voyaging was also observed in Bristol and Liverpool, and has been noted for many other English seaside chapels (Rodger 1998: 142). Another church tale records that the tower served as a lookout post for pirate ships attempting to slip into Plymouth

harbor and raid the surrounding areas. Finally, church folklore has something to say about one of Plympton St. Mary's most notable maritime memorials. This memorial consists of a broken column mounted on a pedestal. The inscription dedicates the monument to three brothers, all of whom lost their lives in different places while serving in the Royal Navy. Identical broken-column monuments are found in many nineteenth century cemeteries, and are meant to symbolize a life cut short. In the case of St. Mary, however, local tradition has added a new feature. According to the sexton, the column symbolizes tragedy at sea, "like the mast of the ship is broken, and the captain has lost control." Plympton's maritime connections were also noted at the nearby church of St. Maurice, which includes the graves of several mariners.

To the west of Plymouth city center, the church of St. Budeaux at Devonport was only six years old when Francis Drake and Mary Newman were married there in 1569. Drake went on to leave his mark on English naval history. Likewise, St. Budeaux became one of England's maritime churches. That St. Budeaux should become a maritime church results largely from its topographic situation. The church is located on a hill overlooking the River Tamar, used for centuries as a transportation route between the interior of Devon and the sea. The church is also close to the Royal Navy dockyard at Devonport. Many well-preserved gravestones in St. Budeaux's cemetery commemorate mariners and dock workers, while wall plaques inside the church perpetuate the memory of others.

Maritime memorialization traditions continue in Plymouth today. At the Barbican, the ancient section of the city that includes the old harbor, a section of wall

facing the water serves as the focus for maritime memorialization. In one section of the Barbican wall, hooks have been placed for the purpose of hanging commemorative wreaths. On the day I visited, sixteen wreaths were in place. These contained cards dedicating them to sailors of the Merchant Navy and Royal Navy who lost their lives in the First and Second World Wars. Farther along from this section, a section of the wall of the Plymouth Lifeboat Guild is designated as the Boatmen's Shelter. It contains plaques commemorating local fishermen who have been lost at sea or killed in accidents since the 1930s. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, the wording of these contemporary plaques is strikingly similar to that used on maritime memorials of previous centuries. It seems that centuries old commemorative practices are still remembered by the fisher folk of Plymouth.

Falmouth

The Cornish port of Falmouth was home to the Post Office Packet Service, which transported mail between North America and England from 1688 to 1852. Falmouth's location in western Cornwall and good deepwater harbor also made it useful for shipping passing up and down the English Channel or engaged in the transatlantic trade.

In addition to its history as a seaport, Falmouth was chosen for survey because Jenkins (1999: 78) reported that nearby St. Mylor church contained many maritime graves. Indeed, St. Mylor was the best example of an English maritime church investigated during the survey. It still possesses a churchyard containing many

eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gravestones. In addition, although the church is

still in use, its interior still boasts many wall plaques and slabs marking burials beneath

the floor. These memorials provide evidence for numerous maritime occupations,

including not only mariners but also fishermen and dockyard workers. The churchyard

also contains a memorial to HMS *Ganges*, a Royal Navy training vessel that was based

in Falmouth from 1866 to 1899. The original monument to *Ganges* was erected in

1872 and consists of an obelisk inscribed with the names of all of the boys died

training aboard the ship. Later additions to the *Ganges* memorial include a wooden

bench and a Remembrance Wall. These additions were made by the HMS *Ganges*

Association, an organization of former crewmates. The memorial continues to serve as

the focus for memorial activity, as evidenced by the red poppy wreaths placed along

the Remembrance Wall. In addition to these forms of commemoration practiced by the

Ganges Association, the memory of the *Ganges* survives in local folk tradition as well.

On two separate occasions while conducting fieldwork in the area, local residents told

me that I should look at the *Ganges* memorial at St. Mylor. Interestingly, both of these

people reported that the memorial commemorated the shipwreck of the *Ganges*. In

reality, *Ganges* never sank; the memorial remembers those who died while serving

aboard her. Oral tradition may have combined the story of the *Ganges* memorial with

accounts of other shipwrecks that are told on the memorials at Mylor church.

Falmouth town cemetery was also visited by the survey. Burials began in this

cemetery in the mid 1800s and continue today. Although this cemetery does not have

the maritime orientation seen at Mylor church, it still contains numerous nautical

memorials. Several gravestones commemorate foreign sailors who died while in port at Falmouth. In addition, the twentieth century section of the cemetery contains a monument to merchant sailors and the graves of 26 Royal Navy sailors from HMS *Registan*, which was sunk during the Second World War.

Bristol

Bristol was already an active seaport in 1497, when John Cabot set sail in the *Matthew* on one of the earliest voyages of exploration to the New World. Over the next two centuries, Bristol became one of the foremost merchant shipping ports in England. The city itself is located at the upper limit of navigation on the River Avon, approximately eight miles from the Severn Estuary (Parker 1999: 323). Due to its location on a river, Bristol did not possess the natural deepwater harbor present in many other ports that lie directly on the sea. However, harbor facilities at Portishead and Avonmouth, near the mouth of the river, provided anchorage for seagoing vessels, while smaller craft were able to navigate upriver to the city docks. Bristol mariners became active in the Newfoundland fishery and the Triangular Trade.

Unfortunately, despite its great maritime past, few nautical memorials remain in modern Bristol. As is typical of large cities in England, most of Bristol's inner city churches had their graveyards cleared during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Later, the city was extensively bombed by the German Luftwaffe during World War II. The bombing, and subsequent rebuilding programs, resulted in the loss or renovation of many older churches in the city center. The church of St. Nicholas,

for example, which is located close to the Avon docks, might have been a focus for maritime activity like that at St. Mylor near Falmouth. Today, however, St. Nicholas is no longer used as a church; instead, it houses the Bristol and Region Archaeological Service. A plaque on the outside wall commemorating the voyage of the *Matthew* is the only trace of maritime heritage that can be seen at St. Nicholas. Nearby, the church of St. Mary Redcliffe still contains some memorials to merchants inside, although the churchyard itself has been cleared.

Only four memorials were recorded in the Bristol area. Three of these came from Shirehampton, a small village several miles downriver from Bristol. The church of St. Mary still possesses a graveyard containing several maritime memorials. One of these is an elaborate monument in the form of a carved anchor resting on a pile of rocks. This memorial, the grave of Captain Morgan P.S. Tozer of Her Majesty's Indian Navy, is the subject of a local legend. According to tradition, Captain Tozer took command of a ship that had been dismasted during a storm at sea and successfully brought it back to port. In the version of the story that I was told, the informant knew neither the name of the vessel nor the location where the incident occurred. Still, Tozer's gallantry lives on in the memory of Shirehampton.

Liverpool

Like Bristol, Liverpool was one of England's leading merchant ports during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Liverpool's shipping increased due to the manufacturing boom caused by the Industrial Revolution. Located in the west of

England, Liverpool was ideally situated to export the products of the Midlands industrial cities to Ireland and North America. Liverpool developed important commercial ties with American seaports such as Charleston, Philadelpha, and Boston. The presence of these ties to America made Liverpool an attractive location to survey. Because of its close links, it was thought that Liverpool might have served as a place for the mingling of English and American maritime memorial practices.

Despite its urban setting, Liverpool was one of the most productive sites surveyed. St. James's cemetery, located adjacent to Liverpool Cathedral, provided a wealth of maritime gravestones. The site of the cemetery originally opened in the seventeenth century as a quarry, and over the years supplied much of the stone used to build the city. After the quarry went out of use in 1825, the site was converted into a cemetery. Its form makes St. James's the most unique cemetery visited by the survey. Instead of the pleasant setting of many cemeteries, which often contain scenic views of the surrounding countryside, to enter St. James's one must descend about 20 meters below the surrounding street level. The feeling of being in a pit is overwhelming. The state of gravestone preservation, however, makes the visit worthwhile. Although most gravestones have been removed from their original locations, many were used to line the walls of the cemetery or to pave sections of the ground. The large number of gravestones dedicated to merchants and mariners seem to indicate that St. James's cemetery most likely served as a major focus for maritime memorial activity in Liverpool. In addition to commemorating British seamen, several stones are dedicated to Americans as well.

The church of St. Nicholas stands across the street from the Mersey River. Before redevelopment of the docks in the twentieth century, the church was located directly on the water. Its location, along with the fact that St. Nicholas was one of the patron saints of sailors, made St. Nicholas a focus for maritime activity. St. Nicholas became known as the "Sailors' Church" because of the votive offerings presented by seamen to give thanks for safe journeys. Today, its churchyard has been cleared. Inside, however, there is a memorial chapel established in 1993 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic. The chapel contains a remembrance book listing the names of Liverpool merchant seamen who were lost during the war and in the years since.

Hull

Located on the River Humber not far from England's east coast, the port of Hull was home to a diverse array of maritime activity. From the Middle Ages, Hull was known for its fishing fleets, which pursued herring and other fish on the North Sea Banks. Merchant mariners from Hull were involved in trade with the European continent, particularly the Baltic Sea ports. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, whaling eclipsed other endeavors as Hull's primary claim to fame. Hull grew to be the foremost whaling port in England, sending its sailors as far as the Pacific in search of whale oil. Like most other English whaling ports, Hull's fleet was decimated by American warships and privateers during the War of 1812. Despite this setback, whaling continued to be a leading industry in Hull until the early twentieth century.

Today, seafaring remains important to the city. The Humber dockyards are still used for trade and shipbuilding, and the city boasts a maritime museum that relates the history of Hull's maritime heritage.

Abandoned and overgrown, Sculcoates Lane Cemetery nevertheless contains a number of excellent maritime memorials. The gravestones at Sculcoates cemetery reflect the diversity of occupations practiced by Hull mariners. Tombstones contain illustrations of fishing smacks and large ship-rigged vessels. In addition to ships, several mid-nineteenth century gravestones with anchors were noted.

Holy Trinity church, not far from the docks in the center of town, served as a focus for maritime activity. The church dates to 1285 and is still in use today. Its churchyard has been cleared, and many gravestones are now used to pave the church's car park. Fortunately, however, most of these were placed facing upward. Despite breaks caused by automobiles, a number of the gravestones can still be read. These include several good examples of maritime gravestones from the late eighteenth century. Inside the church, floor slabs and wall plaques also commemorate mariners. Overall, it seems that Holy Trinity church was used extensively by Hull's maritime community.

Survey Locations in the United States

Boston, Massachusetts

Founded in 1629, Boston's location and fine natural harbor resulted in its development into one of the most important seaports on the east coast of America.

Boston was one of the colonial cities that pioneered trade with the West Indies in the

mid seventeenth century, and international trade remained one of Boston's most

important maritime activities through the end of the age of sail. Boston also developed

a tradition as a naval port. Prior to the American Revolution, Boston shipyards

repaired Royal Navy vessels (Fowler 1976: 10). During the Revolutionary War,

Boston served as a base for Continental Navy warships, Massachusetts State Navy

vessels, and privateers. With the establishment of a permanent navy near the end of the

1700s, Boston's naval tradition continued. The city was once again an important naval

base during the War of 1812. Boston's naval heritage is well remembered today. The

frigate U.S.S. *Constitution*, famous for its victories over the British in the War of 1812,

is preserved there today, the oldest commissioned warship afloat. While trade and

naval matters dominate Boston's maritime tradition, the port was also used by

fishermen and whalers.

The cemeteries around Boston provide excellent insight into maritime

commemoration in America from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries. The

United States was spared the Victorian clearing efforts and Second World War bombs

that have removed so many churches and churchyards in England. For this reason,

ironically, the survey discovered more preserved eighteenth-century gravestones in

New England than in England. Even large cities such as Boston still possess Colonial

era cemeteries in their city centers.

In central Boston, four cemeteries were surveyed. King's Chapel Burying

Ground, Boston's oldest cemetery, was established in 1630, only one year after the

founding of the colony itself. Burials started at Copp's Hill Burying Ground, in

Boston's North End, only a few years later. The colony's growth in the mid

seventeenth century resulted in the construction of another cemetery, the Granary

Burying Ground, in 1660. These three cemeteries met Boston's needs until the 1750s,

when the Central Burying Ground was established on Boston Common. All four of

these cemeteries have long histories. King's Chapel continued in use until around the

beginning of the nineteenth century, while burials continued at Copp's Hill until the

1850s. Both the Granary Burying Ground and the Central Burying Ground remained

in use until the late nineteenth century. Thus, these four urban cemeteries provide an

excellent opportunity for studying Boston's memorialization patterns over time.

Maritime memorials were noted in all four of these cemeteries. King's Chapel

Burying Ground, the Granary Burying Ground, and Central Burying Ground, however,

contained only a few examples each of maritime memorials. Of all of Boston's old

cemeteries, Copp's Hill Burying Ground had the clearest maritime affiliation. The

reason for this is likely due to its location. Copp's Hill is situated in Boston's North

End, close to the wharfs where much of Boston's maritime traffic docked. Its

proximity to the sea made the North End the principal home for members of Boston's

maritime community (Rediker 1987: 62-65). Although the construction of tall

buildings around the cemetery obstructs the view today, one can still catch glimpses of

Boston Harbor while standing among the gravestones of Copp's Hill. It is no surprise

that the survey revealed memorials to several different maritime occupations, including

ship captains, shipwrights, and merchant mariners. In addition, the Old North Church,

located only a few blocks from Copp's Hill Burying Ground, has definite maritime connections. Wall plaques similar to those found in British churches commemorate Boston mariners who were lost at sea or died in distant parts of the globe.

In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, a new trend in cemeteries began in the United States. As in Britain, older urban cemeteries were becoming overcrowded and unhygienic. The response in both countries was the same: new cemeteries were constructed on the outskirts of cities. In addition to providing new space for burials, cemeteries of the Rural Cemetery Movement, as it was known in the United States, were the products of a new mindset. Their creators thought that cemeteries should be peaceful places for the dead to sleep while awaiting resurrection, and should also serve as beautifully landscaped parks for the living (Linden-Ward 1989). Thus, the new rural cemeteries contained not only tombs for the dead but also shady pathways, gazebos, and ponds for the enjoyment of the living.

Two rural cemeteries visited by the survey provide nineteenth-century material to compare with the earlier memorials from Boston's colonial cemeteries. Mount Auburn cemetery in Cambridge, just outside Boston, is one of America's oldest rural cemeteries, having been established in 1831. In this huge cemetery, which has over 50,000 graves, only a few maritime memorials were found. Most of these are easily identifiable by their anchor representations. Nevertheless, considering the size of the cemetery, there were not that many maritime memorials at Mount Auburn. Perhaps the cemetery is simply too far from the sea to have a real maritime orientation. On the other hand, Forest Hills Cemetery, founded in 1848, contains a higher proportion of

maritime memorials than Mount Auburn. This cemetery is located south of Boston

proper, not far from the waters of Dorchester Bay and the wharfs of Boston's South

End. Numerous anchors and ship illustrations on the gravestones mark the tombs of

mariners from the mid nineteenth through the twentieth centuries.

Salem, Massachusetts

Salem remains most famous for the witch trials that took place there in 1692,

and this incident has somewhat overshadowed its maritime history. Nevertheless, this

small seaport was home to an active seafaring community that has left behind

numerous interesting testaments to Salem's maritime heritage. Before the American

Revolution, Salem was involved in seafaring on a modest scale. The port was home to

fishermen who sought their catch on the Georges Bank and Grand Banks. Salem

mariners participated in the colonial coastal trade, for which its shipbuilders also

constructed vessels. Like many other New England ports, Salem was home to

privateers during the Revolutionary War. Salem's heyday as a seaport came after

American independence. From the 1780s until the outbreak of the War of 1812, Salem

served as one of the major ports of the eastern seaboard. Its mariners were among the

first Americans to conduct trade with China, were prominent in the pepper trade with

Sumatra, and also sailed to India, Mauritius, and Arabia. Jefferson's Embargo Act, and

later the War of 1812, devastated Salem's shipping industry. Although merchant

mariners continued to operate from the port until the end of the age of sail, it never

regained the prosperity of the early nineteenth century (Bauer 1988: 54-57).

Three cemeteries in Salem provide evidence of maritime commemoration practices from its early growth through its decline. At Charter Street Cemetery, established as the town's first cemetery in 1637, merchant captains and mariners lie alongside the graves of witch trial victims. Nearby Broad Street Cemetery, established in 1655, also contains numerous mariner's graves from the late 1600s through the middle of the 1800s. Founded in 1801, Howard Street Cemetery provided a few examples of nineteenth-century maritime gravestones, but the soft marble that came into use in the middle of the century did not preserve as well as the slate gravestones from earlier times.

Marblehead, Massachusetts

This small port was founded as a fishing community in 1629. Kull (1975: 114) reported that Old Burial Hill, the town's oldest cemetery, contained a high proportion of stones with interesting epitaphs, and also mentioned the presence of maritime memorials dedicated to Marblehead fishermen. For these reasons, it was thought that this small fishing community might provide interesting comparative material for larger seaports such as Boston.

Of all the cemeteries surveyed, Old Burial Hill features the most intriguing setting. The hill rises above Marblehead harbor, and provides a peaceful setting for watching fishing and pleasure craft. Gravestones descend down the slopes of the hill, clustered together in pockets of soil between areas of exposed bedrock. The top of the hill is dominated by an obelisk-shaped monument. It was erected in 1848 by the

Marblehead Charitable Seamen Society in remembrance of all local seafarers who died both at sea and ashore. Two faces of the obelisk list the names of all those who died in these situations, while another is dedicated to the victims of a gale in 1846 that wrecked ten Marblehead craft, killing 65 fishermen. In form and content, this monument is very similar to contemporary ones in England that were erected by sailors in remembrance of lost shipmates. In addition to this prominently situated monument, Old Burial Hill contains the graves of numerous seafarers from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Gloucester, Massachusetts

Like Marblehead, Gloucester is renowned as a fishing community. Founded in 1623, Gloucester grew into the most important fishing port in the United States. Its fishermen continue to pursue their catch in the waters of the North Atlantic to this day. In recent years, the port has become famous as the home of the lost swordfishing boat *Andrea Gale*, subject of the book and movie *The Perfect Storm*.

Gloucester was chosen for survey for two reasons. First, the town holds an annual memorial service to commemorate those Gloucester mariners who were lost at sea. Survey work in Gloucester was timed to correspond with this ceremony, which takes place on a Saturday in August when the tide is right. The ceremony provides a glimpse of the living tradition of maritime memorialization that is still practiced today.

The second reason for visiting Gloucester was to examine Fishermen's Rest, an area of Beechbrook Cemetery set apart for fishermen. Although not established until

1920, the memorials of the Fishermen's Rest provide some fascinating parallels with older maritime gravestones. In addition, modern fishermen's graves in other parts of Beechbrook Cemetery also illustrate the continuation of maritime memorialization practices. Many of these stones contain depictions of fishing vessels. These illustrations are invariably personalized. They illustrate the deceased person's vessel, not simply a stock one. This is shown by the variations in details among the illustrations and the fact that each one includes the name of the vessel.

New Bedford, Massachusetts

Although perhaps not as well known as Nantucket, New Bedford was the most important American whaling ciry during the nineteenth century, and sent more whalers to sea than any other American port (Starbuck 1964). The city remembers its whaling heritage today. The Historical Park, which contains the New Bedford Whaling Museum, details New Bedford's most important industry of the past.

In New Bedford "there stands a Whaleman's Chapel, and few are the moody fishermen, shortly bound for the Indian Ocean or the Pacific, who fail to make a Sunday visit to the spot," wrote Herman Melville in *Moby Dick* (1977: 35). Melville describes a service there, where the protagonist Ishmael went to ask for God's help before embarking on a whaling voyage. Melville also noted the wall plaques describing the details of New Bedford men lost at sea in all the oceans of the world. The Seamen's Bethel still stands in New Bedford, and its wall plaques attest to the

dangers of the sea. The inscriptions on these plaques are strikingly similar to those on the walls of maritime churches such as St. Mylor and St. Mary's Portsea in England.

New Bedford's Rural Cemetery, as the name implies, was established as part of the Rural Cemetery Movement. Founded in the 1830s, the cemetery contains many tombs of mariners. As was noted at other cemeteries, many of the mid-nineteenth century maritime graves at the Rural Cemetery include depictions of anchors. Overall, the cemetery provides useful material for comparing with the memorials of the New Bedford Seamen's Bethel and other nineteenth century cemeteries.

Portland, Maine

Portland is home to one of the better natural harbors in southern Maine. Despite this advantage, this section of the New England coast was only sparsely populated during the colonial period. Seafaring consisted mostly of fishing and shipping timber from Maine's forests to growing cities such as Boston. Early in the American Revolution, Falmouth, as Portland was then known, was burned by the British. After the war the town was rebuilt and the name was changed to Portland. Following the War of 1812, Portland began to grow in importance as a port. The construction of railroads from interior Maine towns to Portland allowed it to become a regional shipping center. In particular, Portland was heavily involved in trade with Havana, Cuba, supplying that city with containers made of Maine lumber in which to ship sugar and molasses (Bauer 1988: 108-110). Portland remained an important regional shipping center until the late 1800s.

Located on a hill overlooking Portland Harbor, the Eastern Cemetery is the city's oldest burying place. Burials began in the Eastern Cemetery in the seventeenth century and continued until the late nineteenth century. As its location close to the harbor suggests, the Eastern Cemetery contains a large number of seafarers' graves. Among them are many naval seamen, including Edward Preble, an early naval officer most famous for leading an American squadron against Tripoli from 1803 to 1804. The earlier maritime graves, from the eighteenth century, typically have the same decorative motifs as other gravestones. By the mid nineteenth century, however, the anchor begins to appear as a symbol on maritime graves in the Eastern Cemetery.

By the early nineteenth century, the Eastern Cemetery was becoming overcrowded, so a new cemetery was founded along Portland's western promenade in 1829. The Western Cemetery, like other rural cemeteries of the time, was designed to provide a parklike atmosphere. In contrast to the Eastern Cemetery, the Western Cemetery is more open, with large expanses of grass and groves of trees in between the rows of gravestones. Unfortunately, this idyllic setting proved detrimental to the Western Cemetery's gravestones. After going out of use in the twentieth century, the cemetery was used as a city park, and the graves themselves were somewhat neglected for many years. A number of tombstones have been toppled and broken. In addition, many of the mid- to late-nineteenth century gravestones were made from a form of marble that weathers easily. As a result, preservation at the Western Cemetery is in some ways not as good as at the Eastern Cemetery. Nevertheless, a number of maritime stones were discovered and recorded there. As with mid- to late-nineteenth

century stones elsewhere, the ones from the Western Cemetery often include depictions of anchors.

Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Originally founded as a fishing village in 1630, Portsmouth later became involved in the timber trade. By the early eighteenth century, New England's virgin forests had become an important source of supply for masts and spars for Royal Navy vessels (Manning 1979). Portsmouth was one of several seaports that grew up around this trade. During the American Revolution, Portsmouth, like many other New England seaports, built and outfitted privateers to sail against their former trading partners. However, the loss of trade and depredations on its fishing fleet had taken their toll on Portsmouth by the time that the United States won its independence. Although it continued to be a seaport until the end of the age of sail, Portsmouth never attained the status of other major nineteenth century ports such as Boston or Portland.

Survey work in Portsmouth focused on two cemeteries: the Old North Burial Ground and the Union Cemetery. The Old North Burial Ground contains graves from the eighteenth through the early nineteenth century, while the adjacent Union Cemetery has many mid to late nineteenth century graves. Both of these cemeteries are fairly small, and neither contained many nautical memorials. Some eighteenth-century mariner's graves were noted in the Old North Burial Ground, while the Union Cemetery had one gravestone with an anchor depiction from the 1874. Still, the number of maritime gravestones was small in comparison to most other seaports

surveyed. This probably reflects the fact that Portsmouth was largely past its seafaring

prime by the time that these cemeteries came into use.

New London, Connecticut

Located on the Thames River, which provides waterborne access to

Connecticut's interior, New London emerged as a shipping and shipbuilding center

during the colonial period. Colonial seafaring in New London originally depended

mainly on coastal trade with other colonies along the Atlantic seaboard. The city was

destroyed by the British during the Revolutionary War, but this attack did not put an

end to its seafaring tradition. After American independence, the city was rebuilt and

resumed trade once again. New London soon became heavily involved in whaling. Its

vessels had practiced this occupation since the early eighteenth century, but by the

1800s whaling became much more important to the economy of New London. Its

whalers were involved in the pursuit of sperm whales in the new grounds opened in the

Pacific in the early 1800s. New London came to rival Nantucket and New Bedford as

one of America's premier whaling ports (Bauer 1988: 236). Like other whaling cities,

New London suffered from the decline of the whaling industry in the second half of the

nineteenth century.

Two cemeteries amply illustrate New London's maritime heritage. The

Antient Burying Ground, the city's oldest cemetery, contains the graves of many early

New London seafarers. As with other New England cemeteries, the eighteenth-century

mariners' tombs in the Antient Burying Ground do not differ from their contemporaries

in terms of symbolic elements. Seafarers and their families identified themselves by

appellations such as "captain" or "mariner," but their tombstones do not contain any

nautical imagery. However, again following the pattern noted in other New England

cemeteries, the maritime monuments in New London's nineteenth-century cemetery do

make use of maritime imagery. Like the Antient Burying Ground, Cedar Grove

Cemetery, established as part of the Rural Cemetery Movement, includes a large

number of seafarers' graves. Several of these dealt explicitly with whaling, providing

details of men lost overboard from whaleboats. These gravestones sometimes mention

the precise latitude and longitude where the person's death occurred. In addition, as is

common for mid- to late-nineteenth century memorials, many of the maritime

monuments at Cedar Grove make use of the anchor symbol. Finally, the cemetery also

has an obelisk monument commemorating the loss of the steamship *Atlantic* near New

London in 1846. As with similar monuments in New England and England, it provides

the names and details of death of many who perished in the wreck.

Stonington, Connecticut

The small port of Stonington never attained the large volume of shipping that

characterized cities such as Boston or Newport. Like many colonial seaports,

Stonington was involved in coastal trade with other colonies and in trade with the West

Indies. During the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, Stonington privateers

sought British merchant shipping on the high seas, and the British punished the town

with several raids during both of these conflicts.

Stonington was chosen for survey for two reasons. First, it was thought that a smaller seaport might prove an interesting comparison with major ports such as Boston. Second, Kull (1975: 37) reported a large number of well-preserved mariners' graves in Stonington's Old Town Cemetery. Upon investigation, it was determined that the Old Town Cemetery did indeed match Kull's description. Although very small, the cemetery includes numerous sailors' graves. Many of these state the names of vessels and other details concerning how the deceased met their fate.

Stonington's Evergreen Cemetery was founded in the early nineteenth century as the town outgrew its older burial places. Like the Old Town Cemetery, there are many maritime memorials at Evergreen Cemetery. The large proportion of mariners' graves attests to Stonington's continuing seafaring tradition throughout the nineteenth century. As noted in many other places, anchors come into use at Evergreen Cemetery in the middle of the nineteenth century. Overall, the pattern provided by the two cemeteries of this small seaport matches that noted at other locations in New England.

Newport, Rhode Island

Giovanni de Verrazano described Newport as "a very excellent harbour" after discovering it in 1524 (Winship 1905: 14). Verrazano was not mistaken: Newport possesses one of the best natural harbors for sailing vessels along the coast of New England. Newport harbor provided space for many vessels to anchor at once, and was located close to the open sea. In addition, Newport's proximity to the Gulf Stream prevents the harbor from freezing over, a problem that New England ports farther north

sometimes had to face (Robinson 1989: 62). Given these advantages, Newport became a leading colonial port soon after its founding in 1638. In the colonial period, Newport was most famous for its role in the Triangular Trade, exporting rum to Africa, where it was traded for slaves. The slaves were sold in the West Indies, after which vessels would return to New England laden with sugar and molasses. These latter two products were distilled into rum at Newports's many distilleries, and then exported to start the cycle all over again. Today, Newport is no longer a shipping center, but it retains an interest in the sea as one of America's major yachting centers.

Two cemeteries in Newport were visited by the survey. The Common Burying Ground, which opened in the mid 1600s, provides some of the best preserved gravestone carvings in New England (Kull 1975: 193). Among the graves are those of many seafarers. The hard slate used on many of the stones allowed for the recording of several early- to mid-eighteenth-century gravestones with details of maritime tragedies. In addition, the Common Burying Ground also contains a monument to Ida Lewis, a famous nineteenth-century lighthouse keeper. Lewis grew up as the daughter of the keeper of Lime Rock Lighthouse, in Newport Harbor. After her father became too ill to continue his duties, she became keeper in 1858. Over the years, she saved many people from drowning in the harbor, and became a local folk hero (Druett 2000: 237-239). Her monument depicts an anchor and a set of oars symbolic of the oars used in her rescue lifeboats.

The Island Cemetery, which lies adjacent to the Common Burying Ground, was Newport's major nineteenth-century cemetery. It is particularly noted for monuments

to the nineteenth-century naval heroes Oliver Hazard Perry and Matthew C. Perry.

Oliver Hazard Perry was famous for his victory over the British on Lake Erie during

the War of 1812. He is commemorated today with a tall obelisk, around which are

grouped the tombstones of his family. His brother, Matthew C. Perry, was best known

for leading a diplomatic mission to Japan, which led to the opening of trade between

the United States and that nation (Schroeder 1985: 139-158). In addition to these

famous naval men, the Island Cemetery also contains typical mid-nineteenth-century

maritime memorials, attesting to Newport's continued role as a seaport until the end of

that century.

CHAPTER V

DATA OVERVIEW

This chapter provides a summary of the trends noticed in the development of maritime memorialization. The purpose of this summary is not to provide detailed interpretations of the data. Rather, this summary presents quantitative results such as numbers of maritime memorials, their spatial and chronological distribution, and their general physical characteristics. Detailed interpretations of the memorials, and what they reveal about mariners as a folk group, will be presented in the chapters that follow.

Number and Chronological Range

The survey recorded a total of 412 maritime memorials, 207 in England and 205 in the United States. Table 1 shows the number of memorials recorded at each survey location. The memorials range in date from 1674 (MR# 154, Holy Trinity, Hull) to 2000 (MR#s 342 and 346, Plymouth). Although the primary focus of this study is on the period from 1700 to 1940, a few earlier and later memorials were recorded to provide comparison with other periods.

One of the great advantages of studying memorials is the tight chronological control possible. Unlike prehistoric archaeology, which typically deals with date ranges in terms of centuries, memorials usually record the year, and in some cases the exact day, that they were erected. Gravestones were typically put in place within a year of the person's death (Dethlefsen and Deetz 1966: 502).

Table 1. Number of memorials recorded at each survey location.

England		United States	
Location	Number	Location	Number
Portsmouth		Boston, Massachusetts	
Portsea St. Mary	10	Copp's Hill Burial Ground	19
Royal Navy Cemetery	13	King's Chapel	1
Kingston Road Cemetery	6	Granary Burying Ground	2
Highland Road Cemetery	3	Mt. Auburn Cemetery	7
Portchester St. Mary	3	Forest Hills Cemetery	5
Alverstoke St. Mary	3		
Hayling, St. Mary the Virgin	3	Salem, Massachusetts	
Warblington St. Thomas	5	Old Burying Point	15
		Howard Street Burial Ground	4
Portland		Broad Street Cemetery	3
Wyke Regis All Saints'	8		
Portland St. George	14	Marblehead, Massachusetts	
		Old Burial Hill	10
Plymouth			
Barbican	16	Gloucester, Massachusetts	
St. Andrews	2	Beechbrook Cemetery	4
Plympton St. Mary	6		
Plympton St. Maurice	2	New Bedford, Massachusetts	
Devonport St. Budeaux	15	Rural Cemetery	22
		Seamen's Bethel	20
Falmouth			
Falmouth Town Center	1	Portland, Maine	
Falmouth Cemetery	12	Eastern Cemetery	17
St. Mylor	25	Western Cemetery	12
Bristol		Portsmouth, New Hampshire	
Bristol Cathedral	1	Old North Cemetery	3
Shirehampton St. Mary	3	Union Cemetery	1
Liverpool		New London, Connecticut	
St. James's Cemetery	35	Antient Burying Ground	5
		Cedar Grove Cemetery	29
Hull			
Sculcoates Lane Cemetery	6	Stonington, Connecticut	
Holy Trinity	15	Old Town Cemetery	6
		Evergreen Cemetery	8
		Newport, Rhode Island	
		Common Burying Ground	8
		Island Cemetery	4
Total:	207	Total:	205

For the purposes of this study, I have grouped the memorials according to the decade that they were erected. While it is possible to tell the exact year that some were erected, such tight chronological control is not really needed in this case. Grouping the memorials by decade makes it possible to track changes over the 140-year period under study.

Assigning each memorial to a decade was usually a straightforward task. At times, however, date assignments were problematic. This usually occurred when one gravestone was used to commemorate more than one person. The other people commemorated were not always mariners: wives, children, and other relatives were often included on sailors' gravestones. In such cases, the memorial was assigned to the decade when the commemoration for the sailor occurred, in keeping with the focus of this study, which is to examine forms of memorialization used for mariners. A number of times, this resulted in the memorial being assigned to a date several decades *later* than the sailor or sailors actually died. For example, the inscription on the Read family gravestone from Portland St. George, Dorset (MR# 35; Figure 5), reads:

In Loving Memory Of
OUR DEAR MOTHER
ANN READ
WIFE OF CAP^{TN} THOMAS ELLIOTT READ,
WHO DIED JANUARY 18TH 1896,
Aged 88 Years.
To dwell with Christ is better life.
Also OF OUR THREE BROTHERS,
CAP^{TN} THOMAS ELLIOTT READ
and JOHN READ,
LOST AT SEA BY THE FOUNDERING OF THE
S.S. THEBAN,
ABOUT JANUARY 6TH 1870,
and JOSEPH READ

LOST IN THE WRECK OF THE
S.S. CAMBRIA,
OCTOBER 19TH 1870.
In the midst of life we are in death.
Also OF OUR DEAR SISTER
MARTHA ELLIOTT READ
WHO DIED MARCH 2ND 1901.
Aged 62 Years.
Escaped to the Mansions of light,
And lodged in the Eden above.

Figure 5. Read family gravestone. MR# 35, Portland St. George, Dorset.

Despite the fact that the three Read mariners were lost in 1870, the commemoration does not date to that time, because they are listed after Ann Read, who died in 1896. In this case, the wording and fonts used show a great deal of similarity, and it is likely that the entire inscription was done at the same time. This stone, therefore, was assigned to the first decade of the twentieth century based on the final date listed.

In other cases, dates follow a chronological progression from earliest at the top of the stone to latest at the bottom. It is likely that such stones were erected at the time of the first date listed, and added to over the years (this practice is still used today). Unfinished stones were noted in several of the cemeteries, showing that this practice was indeed in use in earlier periods. For this reason, such gravestones were usually assigned to the decade when the sailor's death occurred, even if later dates were listed on the same stone. Exceptions were made in cases where the wording and style seemed to indicate that the entire inscription was carved at once. When in doubt, the memorial was assigned to the latest date listed. It was possible to assign 401 of the 412 memorials recorded to a decade (Figure 6). The dates of the other eleven remain unknown, either because no date was listed or because the date was too worn to read.

Although the overall numbers of memorials are roughly the same for both England and the United States, more eighteenth-century memorials were recorded in the United States than in England (Figures 7 and 8). This is due to several factors. First, graveyard clearance during the nineteenth century was practiced more in Great
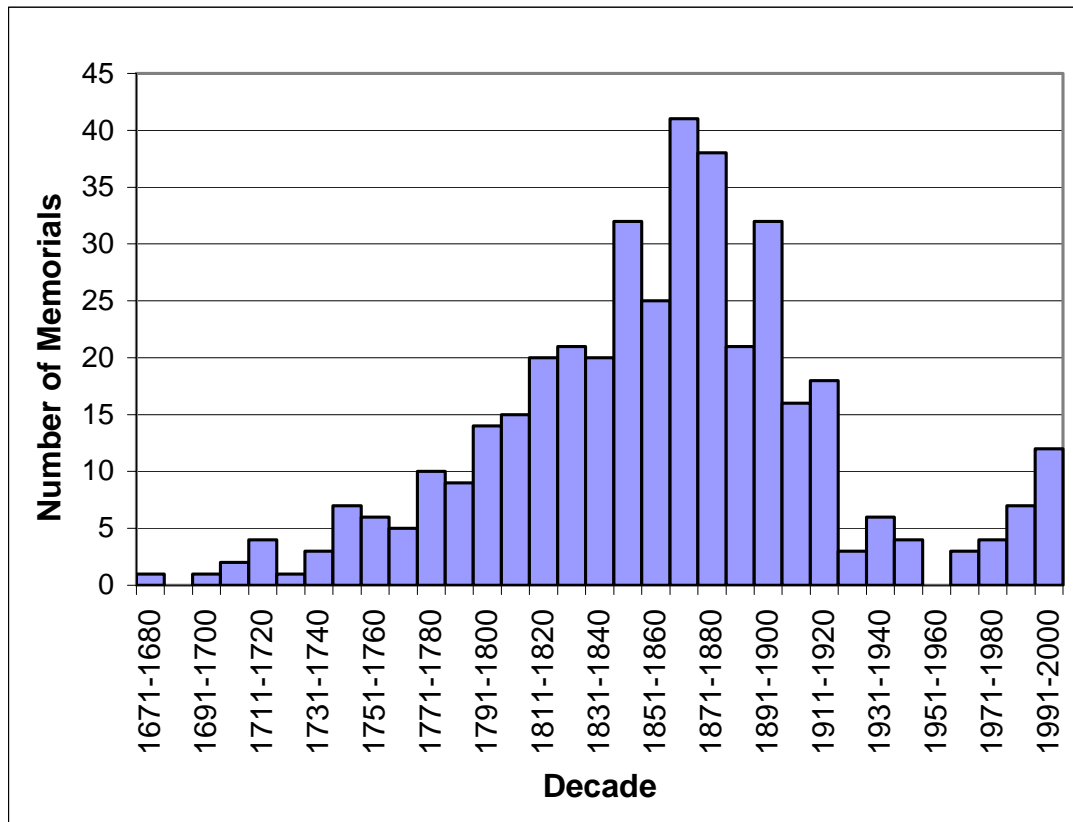
Figure 6. Chronological distribution of all memorials recorded by the survey.
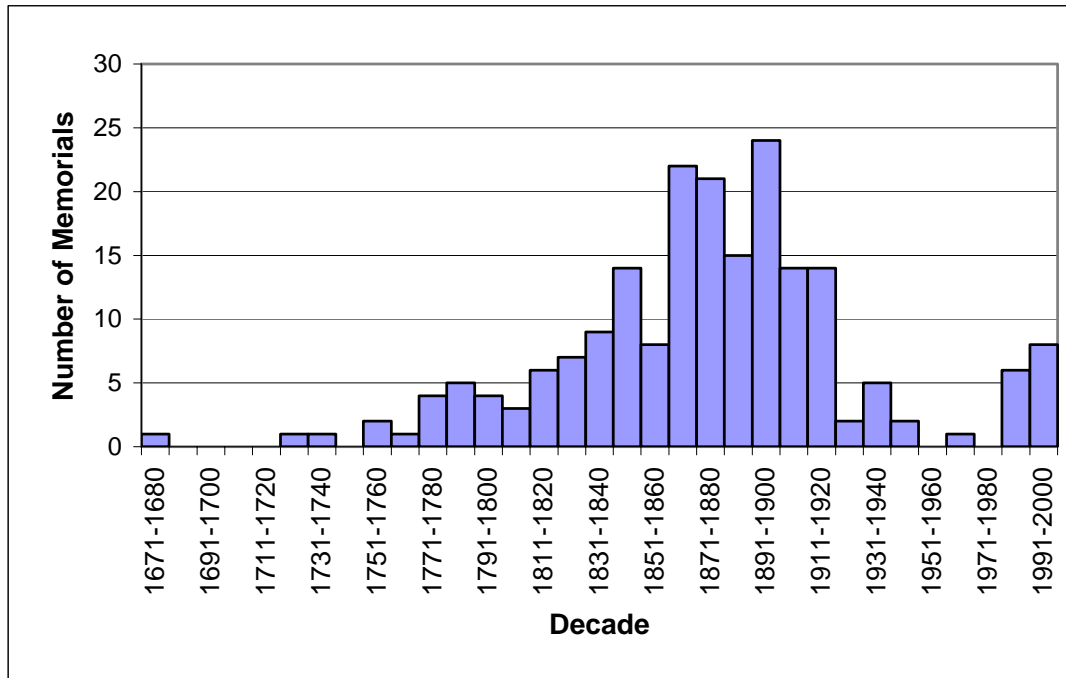
Figure 7. Chronological distribution of memorials from England.
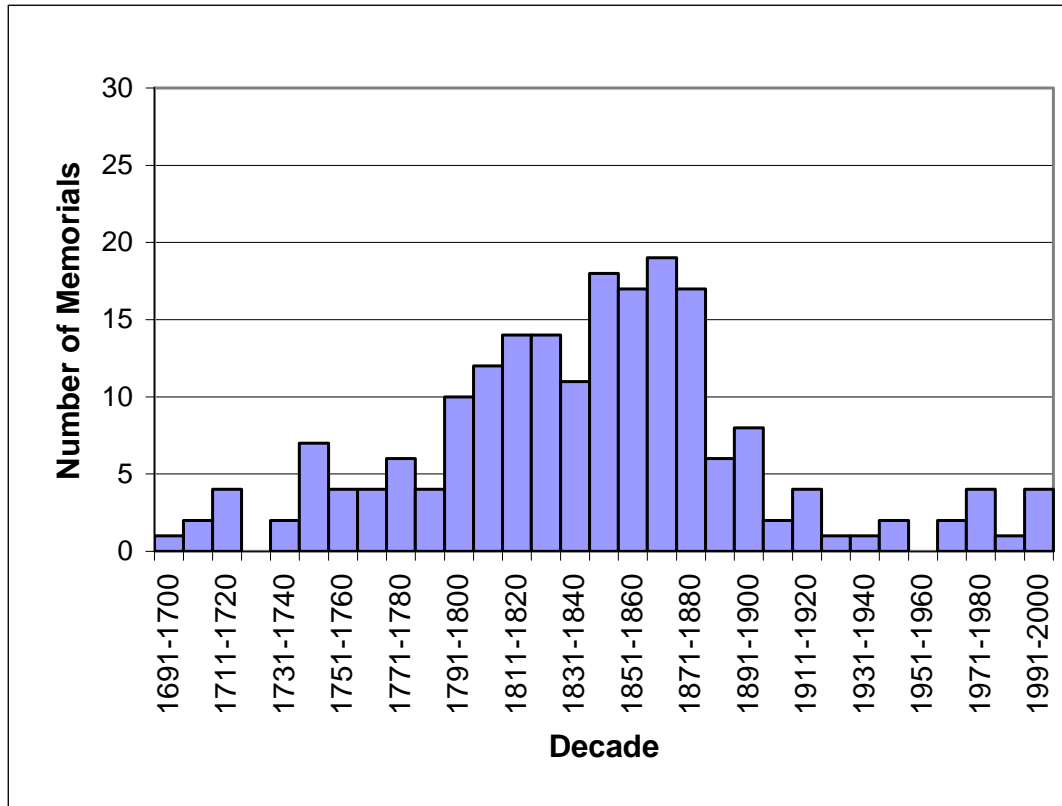
Figure 8. Chronological distribution of memorials from the United States.

Britain than in the United States. In addition, a number of English churches were

destroyed or heavily damaged by bombing in World War II. In many of these cases,

the remains of the church were removed and the churchyard converted to parks or

covered by buildings. The choice of stone used for gravestones was another factor that

led to better preservation of early gravestones in the United States than in England.

Many colonial American gravestones are made of slate, which resists weathering well.

It is not unusual to find well-preserved and easily readable seventeenth-century

gravestones in New England cemeteries. By contrast, most of the eighteenth-century

English gravestones recorded were cut from softer limestone, which has been worn

away over time. During the survey, many early gravestones that were totally

unreadable were seen in English churchyards. Finally, Tarlow (1999) and others have

argued that few permanent gravestones were erected in English churchyards before the

late eighteenth century. Until that time, graves were often reused and either marked

with perishable grave markers or not marked at all. Tarlow (1998; 1999) argues

convincingly for a real increase in gravestones throughout Great Britain in the late

eighteenth century. This study cannot contribute to this debate, as only nineteen

eighteenth-century gravestones were recorded in England. However, the fact that

thirteen of these are from the last three decades of the eighteenth century is consistent

with Tarlow's observations.

Form of Memorials

The memorials recorded fall into two broad categories. First are the collective memorials, which record the death of many people. Some collective memorials commemorate the loss of entire vessels, such as the obelisk that the citizens of New London erected to memorialize those lost in the steamer *Atlantic*, which wrecked on Fisher's Island, just off the coast of Connecticut, in 1846 (MR# 261; Figure 9).
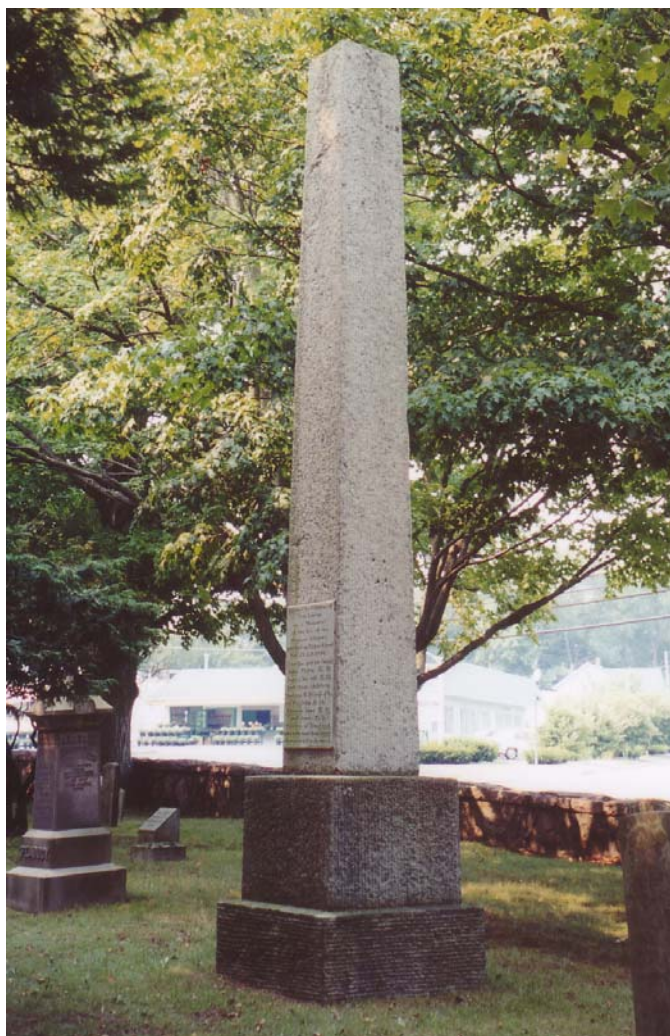
Figure 9. Monument in Cedar Grove Cemetery, New London, Connecticut, commemorating the loss of the steamer *Atlantic*.

Erected by Citizens of
New London
as a memorial
of the loss of the
Steamer Atlantic
wrecked on Fishers Island
Nov. 27 A.D. 1846

Near this spot are buried
John Walton AE 51
[   ]
[   ]
[   ]
[   ]

Natives of England
who with more than thirty
others perished in the wreck.

Gravestones were also used for collective memorials. The citizens of Mylor,

for example, erected a gravestone to commemorate all those who died when the *Queen*

troop transport wrecked on the rocky coast of Cornwall (MR# 84; Figure 10).

Collective memorials, however, did not always commemorate shipwrecks. At the

conclusion of a voyage, ships' crews often dedicated a monument in a cemetery or a

plaque in a maritime church to all those shipmates who died during that voyage. A

number of these were recorded by the survey.

Far more numerous than collective memorials are gravestones that honor single

mariners or a few sailors from the same family. Lost sailors were sometimes given

their own gravestone, but often were listed on the stones of other family members.
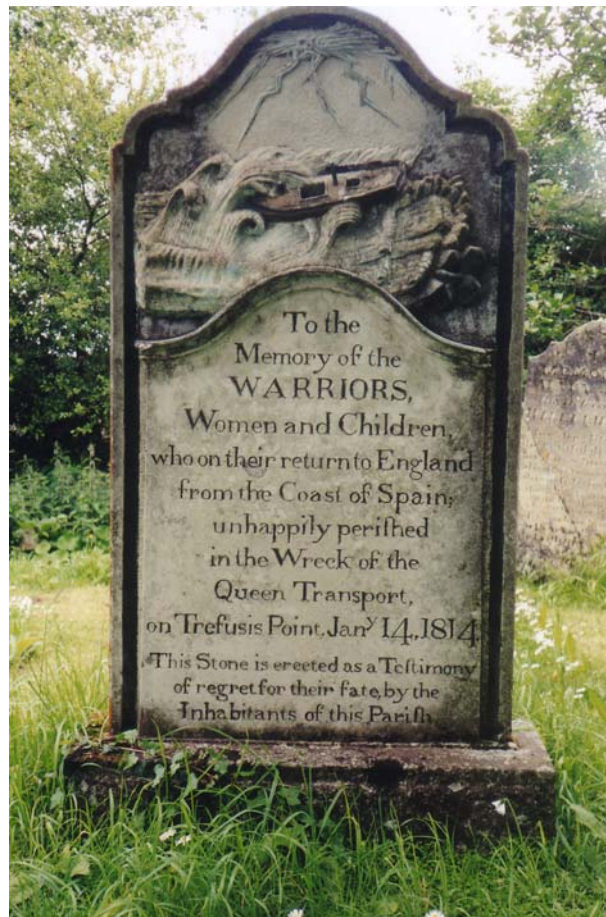
Figure 10. Memorial to the wreck of the *Queen* troop transport. MR# 84, St. Mylor, Cornwall.

To the
Memory of the
WARRIORS,
Women and Children,
who on their return to England
from the Coast of Spain
unhappily perifhed
in the Wreck of the
Queen Transport,
on Trefusis Point Jany 14, 1814

This Stone is erected as a Teftimony
of regret for their fate by the
Inhabitants of this Parifh

Topographic Situation and Orientation

Monuments intended for a public audience were usually situated in highly visible locations, often ones with some connection to the person or event that was being commemorated. Some of the collective memorials recorded during the survey fit this pattern. In Falmouth, the monument dedicated to the Packet Service is located in the middle of the town square (MR# 90; Figure 11). Also, collective memorials in cemeteries were often situated at conspicuous locations, such as near entrances or beside the intersections of major pathways. Likewise, those collective memorials on the walls of churches were meant to be viewed by many people. Highly visible places such as these allow members of the public the opportunity to study the monuments and reflect upon their meanings. The monuments are thus a form of public performance, whereby the meanings and values embodied in them by their creators are placed on display for public consumption.

Grave markers also express meanings and values, but are not typically located in such prominent public locations. In a few instances, particular cemeteries or areas of cemeteries are dedicated solely to mariners. For example, Royal Navy cemeteries exist in Haslar (outside Portsmouth) and Portland, England. In Gloucester, Massachusetts, an area of the Beechbrook Cemetery designated the Fisherman's Rest contains the graves of local fishermen. Still, the majority of maritime graves recorded by the survey were scattered throughout churchyards and cemeteries, with no attempt made to separate seamen from other members of the public.

Figure 11. Monument in Falmouth, Cornwall, to those who sailed in the Packet Service from that port between 1688 and 1852.

Memorials to individuals from higher social classes, such as naval officers and merchant captains, tended to be placed in more prominent locations. Such individuals had a higher chance of being buried or commemorated inside of churches, for example, or having their tombs placed alongside prominent walkways in cemeteries. This standard, however, is not unique to mariners, but rather holds true for all high-status social groups.

The survey found no real distinction in orientation between maritime gravestones and those of other people. Christian burials are traditionally oriented east-west, and many maritime graves conformed to this custom. However, the specific topographic conditions within each cemetery often dictated burial alignments other than east-west. On Old Burial Hill in Marblehead, Massachusetts, for example, areas of exposed granite bedrock limit the choices for grave orientation. In other cemeteries, especially the nineteenth-century rural cemeteries, the topographic layout of paths, ponds, and other features influenced grave orientation.

Material

The materials used for constructing the memorials recorded were consistent with those of other memorials from the same cultures and time periods. In most cases, maritime gravestones employed the same types of local stones as were used in other monuments in the same cemeteries. As with any other types of monuments, those that were richer or more elaborate tended to employ a wider range of materials.

Gender

Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of maritime memorials recorded by the survey commemorate males. A few, however, were commissioned by sailors to memorialize wives who had passed away. Several of these employ maritime language and imagery, and provide a glimpse of the ways that sailors thought about the women in their lives.

Imagery

Before the survey was undertaken, my hypothesis was that the bell might figure prominently in gravestone imagery. Aboard ship, bells are used to mark the passage of time, both for navigational purposes and for the change of watches. The burial at sea ritual, like funerals on land, also includes the ringing of the ship's bell. The hypothesis that bells would show up in gravestone imagery, however, turned out to be completely false. Not one memorial recorded contained a representation of a bell. In addition, bells were mentioned in only a couple of inscriptions.

In fact, until the middle of the eighteenth century, imagery on maritime gravestones did not differ from other gravestones. Many of the eighteenth-century stones recorded by the survey have no imagery at all. Others reflect the trends present in English and American society at the time. Death's heads are used on stones until the mid-eighteenth century, after which cherubs, followed by urn and willow motifs, become the major symbols used.

Beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, maritime imagery began to appear on gravestones in both England and America. Depictions of vessels, such as that on the gravestone of John Jacob at South Hayling, which dates to the 1770s (Figure 12), were the most numerous maritime motifs in the eighteenth century. Vessel depictions continued throughout the nineteenth century. However, ship illustrations were never common.

Figure 12. Single-masted vessel on the gravestone of John Jacob. MR# 13, South Hayling, Hampshire.

In the nineteenth century, illustrations of anchors began to appear on maritime memorials in both England and the United States. By the mid-nineteenth century, the anchor had become the dominant seafaring symbol. Anchors served two purposes. First, anchors identified the person being commemorated as a sailor. In addition to serving as a symbol of maritime identity, however, the anchor was also used as a religious symbol. From the mid-nineteenth century until the end of the period under study, anchors were identified with Jesus Christ and used as a symbol of hope and faith.

Inscriptions

Inscriptions can be divided into several parts. The first part is the *introductory phrase*, which usually follows a set formula such as "here lies" or "in memory of." This is followed by the name of the deceased. An *identifier*, which might refer to the person's occupation, rank, or family, often accompanies the name. Next, the *death phrase* describes the manner of death. As with the introductory phrase, the death phrase often employs formulaic wording such as "departed this life." The death phrase is almost always accompanied by the date of death and the age of the person at the time of death. Additional details are sometimes provided as well, especially if the person's death occurred under unusual circumstances. On maritime gravestones, the death phrase is often accompanied by a more detailed description of the sailor's fate. Finally, some gravestones include an *epitaph*, which often takes the form of a verse of poetry or a quote from the Bible. Not every stone contains all of these elements. Some simply give the person's name, date of death, and age. Many stones, however, include one or more of these elements, and the wording used can provide important details concerning attitudes towards death. The sections below describe the trends noticed for each of these elements on the stones recorded by the survey.

Introductory Phrase

Introductory phrases on the memorials recorded by the survey change significantly over time. Until the mid-1700s, "here lies" is the only introductory wording recorded. This phrase remained in use as late as the 1860s, but was not

common after the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Instead, the phrases "in memory of" and "to the memory of," which came into use in the 1740s, became the dominant wording by the end of the eighteenth century. A variant phrase, "sacred to the memory of," also started in the 1780s. The shift away from recording the position of a body and instead focusing on the memory of the deceased has also been noted previously in New England (Dethlefsen and Deetz 1966; Deetz 1977). Tarlow (1999) discovered the same pattern in the Orkney Islands. In both of these studies, the shift occurred in the mid-eighteenth century. The memorials recorded by the Maritime Memorials Survey in both England and New England agree with these studies. All of these data suggest that in the middle of the eighteenth century, the memory of the deceased person became more important than previously, when memorialization consisted simply of noting the location where the body was buried.

It is no surprise that the idea of remembering a person rather than their physical remains became prominent in maritime communities. Seafarers were often lost at sea or died on foreign shores far from home. In the vast majority of such cases, the mariner's body would never be returned to his family. Those lost overboard were often never recovered, while sailors who died in foreign ports would most likely be buried there. In the absence of physical remains, family members were left only with memories. The prevalence of gravestones with phrases such as "in memory of," therefore, represents more than simply a continuation of the dominant manner of burial in society at large. Among maritime folk, it likely represented an appropriate term simply because so many seamen never returned.

Identifier

Common maritime identifiers recorded by the survey included "captain" (for both naval and merchant seafarers) and "master mariner." Naval officers were most often identified by rank. Common sailors usually did not have an identifier, but sometimes were listed as "A.B." (for Able Bodied seaman) or "Ordy" (Ordinary seamen). Table 2 lists the various identifiers listed on the memorials, grouped by naval, merchant and whaling, and shore-based categories.

Table 2. Job titles listed on the memorials recorded by the survey.

Title	Number
Naval	
Commissioned Officers	33
Warrant & Petty Officers	37
Seamen	59
Merchant & Whaling	
Captains & Masters	121
Chief Officers & Mates	13
Petty Officers	2
Seamen	4
Shore-Based Jobs	
Shipwright	5
Dockyard Worker	3
Merchant	9
Ship Broker	1
Ship Owner	3
Pilot	7

As can be seen, officers, both naval and civilian, figure prominently in the memorials recorded by the survey. This is likely due to their greater economic power:

officers and their families could afford to erect permanent memorials, an option not

always available to common seamen and their families. Nevertheless, many common

sailors are represented. Memorials for 59 naval seamen of various grades were

recorded. Only four civilians were identified as common sailors on memorials.

However, memorials for 84 other young men in their teens and twenties did not list any

rank. The circumstances in which these men died - such as falling from aloft, being

lost overboard, or being shipwrecked - leave no doubt that most of them were seamen.

It appears that civilians did not generally list a sailor's rank unless he was an officer.

Death Phrase

The death phrases of maritime gravestones show a startling difference from

non-maritime ones. The gravestones of non-seafarers usually employ simple phrases

such as "died" or "departed this life." Maritime memorials, on the other hand, reveal

the many ways that sailors died. As discussed in chapter 1, seafaring was an extremely

dangerous profession. Sailors faced many threats to life and limb, and the memorials

recorded by the survey reveal most of these (Table 3).

Table 3. Manner of death listed on the memorials recorded in the survey.

Death Phrase	Number	Percentage
Died	174	38.6
Died at Sea	51	11.3
Died Far Away	51	11.3
Lost at Sea	44	9.8
Loss of Vessel	41	9.1
Illness	8	1.8
Violence	13	2.9
Accidents	69	15.3
Total:	451	100.1

The nearly 40% of sailors whose manner of death is recorded as "died" seem to represent mariners who died at home of natural causes. The memorials, however, confirm the belief that seafaring in the Age of Sail was a hazardous occupation. Over 40% died at sea, on foreign shores, or in vessels that foundered or were shipwrecked.

Moreover, the distinction between the phrases "died at sea" and "lost at sea" is not merely a semantic one. Analysis indicates that those who created the memorials consciously used these phrases to distinguish between two different manners of death. This interpretation is supported by two pieces of evidence. First, a number of memorials include both phrases, with "died at sea" being used for one sailor and "lost at sea" for another. A gravestone in the Eastern Cemetery in Portland, Maine, for example, records the fates of three seafaring brothers (MR# 249):

ERECTED
in memory of
three sons of
DANIEL and NABBY COBB,
WILLIAM, who died at Sea,
Jan. 1805, AEt 21:
DANIEL, at St. Bartholomews,
Nov. 28, 1810, AEt. 21:
SMITH WOODWARD, lost at
Sea, Jan. 1815
AEt. 22.

The dedication, "in memory of three sons," clearly shows that the inscription was carved at one time, rather than being added on to over the years. The Cobbs made sure that the stone told the correct story of their sons, distinguishing died at sea, died in another place, and lost at sea.

In addition, primary accounts show that sailors distinguished between these two forms of death. For example, Barlow (1934: 547) mentions that aboard the *Fleet* frigate, "three died and one was drowned." In another passage, Barlow describes the demise of four sailors who fell from aloft. Two fell into the sea and were drowned, while the other two fell onto the deck and were killed (Barlow 1934: 465). "Lost at sea" usually refers to those who fell overboard or who were swept overboard. "Died at sea," on the other hand, includes those who died by accident (such as falling from aloft) or due to some other cause while aboard ship.

It is likely that the "died at sea" category includes many who died on board due to illness. Only a few memorials mention sickness, despite the fact that contemporary accounts make it clear that illness was one of the major killers in the Age of Sail. Illness did not, however, figure prominently in the minds of those who created maritime memorials. Instead, they chose to emphasize deaths at sea, those who were lost at sea, or death in foreign lands. In the vast majority of such cases, the sailor's body was never returned home. Memorializing men whose bodies were absent formed a major part of maritime commemoration practices.

Age at Death

Not all memorials list the age at which the person died, but many do. Table 4 shows the ages at death listed on the memorials recorded by the survey. Over half of those listed (56.5%) were younger than 40 years of age. This is not surprising, as most sailors were young men. When one graphs the ages of occupied versus unoccupied

Table 4. Age at death on the memorials recorded by the survey.

Age	Number	Percentage
1-10	1	0.3
11-20	41	11.6
21-30	84	23.7
31-40	74	20.9
41-50	44	12.4
51-60	36	10.2
61-70	36	10.2
71-80	27	7.6
81-90	10	2.8
91-100	1	0.3
Total:	354	100.0

graves, however, a significant trend emerges (Figure 13). The curve for occupied

graves is fairly constant, and includes roughly equal numbers of men from the age of

50 to 80. Men in their 60s at time of death represent the highest single age category

among occupied graves. Most likely, these represent sailors who retired from the sea

and died at home. Young sailors, on the other hand, account for the bulk of

unoccupied graves. Four out of every five memorials where the body is not present

(81.1%) commemorate sailors age 40 years or younger. Only 32 out of 175

unoccupied graves (18.3%) commemorate men between the ages of 40 and 60, and

only 1 was erected in tribute of a sailor older than 60. Just as young men comprised

the majority of ships' crews, they were also most likely to be lost or buried far from

home. Those who did retire from the sea, however, had a fair chance of reaching old

age.
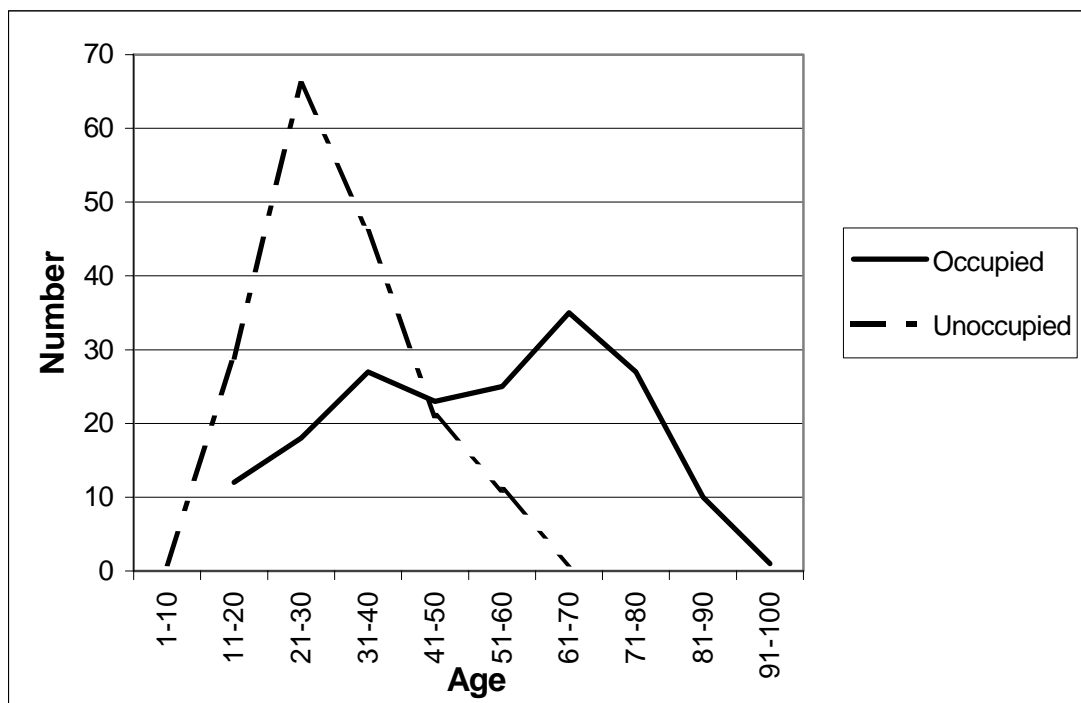
Figure 13. Occupied versus unoccupied graves, by age.

Details of Death

Because so many seafarers died in horrific circumstances (compared to land-based society), many maritime memorials include the story of the sailor's fate. Descriptions of the dangers of the natural world, including shipwreck, storms, and falls from aloft, loom large on sailors' gravestones. The large number of stones that include the details of death show the importance that sailors' families and shipmates attached to telling the story of their loved one's last moments.

Epitaph

Epitaphs on maritime gravestones are often not substantially different than on those of non-seafarers. Some, however, emphasize aspects of maritime death already mentioned, such as describing a body being lost forever in the deep. In the mid-nineteenth century, epitaphs with religious themes become prominent on maritime gravestones.

Summary

Study of the memorials recorded by the survey reveals four major themes. First, a number of memorials describe the dangers faced by mariners, including both the perils of the natural world and the hazards of the maritime workplace environment. Next, given the large number of deaths at sea, the burial at sea ritual must have been important aboard ship for properly disposing of the body and recreating the social structure. Third, maritime communities were forced to find ways to grieve for the large number of sailors who never returned. Finally, the rise of religion in the mid-nineteenth century, shown by the use of the anchor symbol and religious inscriptions, represents a significant development in maritime life. Each of these themes will be explored in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER VI

THE DANGERS OF SEAFARING LIFE

AND THE SHAPING OF MARITIME WORLDVIEW

In the city of Hull, East Yorkshire, once one of England's foremost whaling

ports, the former graveyard of Holy Trinity church has been turned into a parking lot,

with many old gravestones serving as pavement (Figure 14). Despite this bizarre

treatment, the gravestone of eighteenth-century sailor John J. Powell, who died in

1785, can still be read (MR# 147; Figure 15). Powell's epitaph expresses a common

sentiment among mariners in the Age of Sail:

> from storms and rocks
> from sea and tide
> I safely here at
> anchor ride.

Figure 14. Parking lot of Hull Holy Trinity church. Most of the paving stones are
reused gravestones.

Figure 15. John Powell's gravestone, incorporated into the car park at Hull Holy Trinity. MR# 147.

A number of the memorials recorded by the survey describe the hazards of the natural world, especially the threat sailors faced from storms, rocky shores, and shipwreck. Others speak of hazards of the shipboard work environment: falling from aloft, capsizing in small boats, and the mariner's great fear of fire were all recorded on maritime memorials. All of these dangers had a profound impact on maritime worldview. To cope with such difficulties, the maritime folk group developed a fatalistic attitude and a strong group ethic that emphasized taking care of other group members, even if it meant putting one's own life in danger.

Rocks and Storms

In his excellent book *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World 1700-1750*, Marcus Rediker (1987) identified two main difficulties that sailors had to overcome. The first was the "devil": the owners of vessels and the masters who commanded them. Owners and masters sought to get as much work as possible from sailors while giving as little pay and benefits as possible. Much of Rediker's work concerns the ways in which mariners sought to beat the devil through tactics such as work slowdowns and strikes. Rediker also identifies the other great difficulty of maritime life, the forces of nature, which he terms "the deep blue sea." While Rediker does not discuss the dangers of nature in detail, the maritime memorials recorded by the survey support his claim that the power of nature had a strong hold on the maritime mind.

Among the dangers of the natural world, two recur over and over again in both primary accounts from the Age of Sail and on the memorials recorded by the survey: rocks and storms. The power of rocks and storms is graphically illustrated on two memorials recorded by the survey. A gravestone in Warblington, England, commemorates William Palmer, who was killed when his vessel sank while entering the port of Dublin, Ireland in 1759 (MR# 17). Although the gravestone does not specify the cause of the sinking, a carving on the top of the stone graphically depicts the event (Figures 16 and 17). The carving depicts a view of the harbor of Dublin, with buildings surrounding the water. Palmer's vessel seems to be on its beam ends or possibly capsized in the waves, close to a structure that may be a dock. The carving is

Figure 16. William Palmer's gravestone. MR# 17, St. Thomas á Becket, Warblington.

Figure 17. Detail of MR# 17, showing the harbor scene and Palmer's vessel.

intended to represent the moment of disaster, as Palmer's vessel still has its sails set, and another craft approaches as if to render assistance. Farther west, in the churchyard of St. Mylor, Cornwall, another gravestone depicts a similar moment of disaster (Figures 18 and 19). This gravestone records the loss of the *Queen*, a transport vessel that was driven ashore at Trefusis Point near Mylor in 1814 (MR# 84). The loss of life in this incident was horrific, as the *Queen* was bringing soldiers and their families home from Spain. The illustration shows the *Queen* in her moment of tragedy, dismasted and wallowing in a heavy sea as waves crash over the deck. Above, lightning arches out of the sky. As with the stone of William Palmer in Warblington, the *Queen* memorial emphasizes the moment when human life was overcome by the forces of nature. It was that moment when all hope was finally lost and humanity succumbed to nature. The same theme is depicted in a cenotaph from Evergreen Cemetery in Portland, Maine, which commemorates Captain Samuel Tucker, who was lost at sea in 1882 (Figure 20). The top of Captain Tucker's cenotaph is elaborately carved in the representation of a broken mast and topmast, with rigging still attached, floating on the waves. Like the memorials discussed above, this monument symbolizes the moment when humanity finally succumbed to nature and was wiped from the surface of the sea, leaving only a few traces that were soon lost forever.

In addition to depictions of the power of nature, several memorials recorded by the survey feature epitaphs that provide additional evidence of the mariners' fear of rocks and storms. In the Old Town cemetery in Stonington, Connecticut, the epitaph
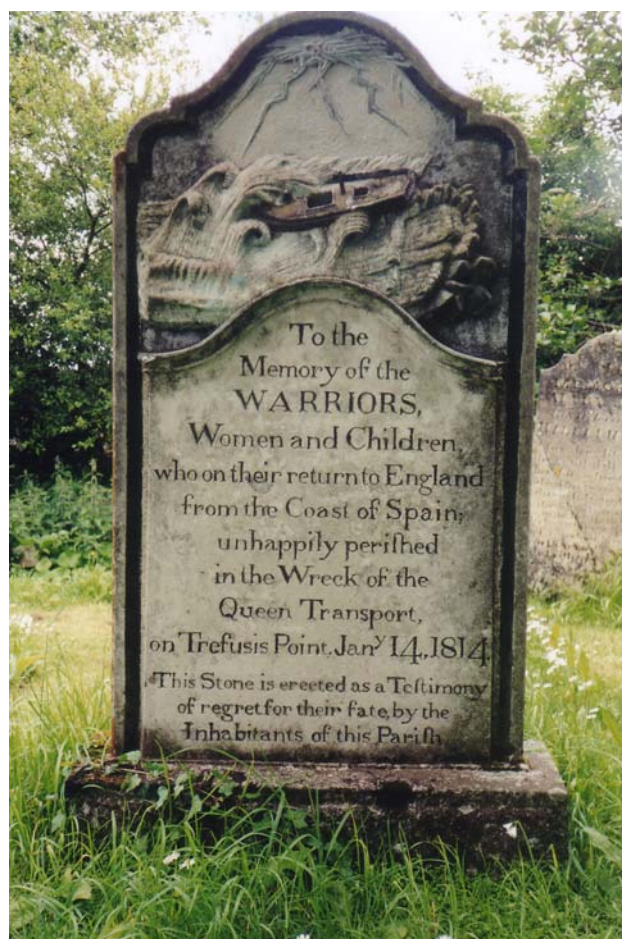
Figure 18. Memorial for the *Queen* transport. MR# 84, St. Mylor, Cornwall.

Figure 19. Detail of MR# 84, illustrating the tragic last moments of the *Queen*.

Figure 20. Cenotaph of Captain Samuel Tucker, Portland, Maine. Photo courtesy of Dr. James Bradford.

on the gravestone of Captain Thomas Robinson (MR# 285) describes the loss of his

vessel in a storm in 1795:

> Billow on billow roll a trying scene
> Till forc'd at last to the tremendous verge
> At once she sinks.

A memorial to the loss of the ship *Alexander* at All Saints Church, Wyke Regis,

Dorset, also describes the terror of storms at sea (MR# 28):

> Sudden destruction rear'd his great form
> Black with the horrors of the midnight storm
> And all convuls'd with elemental strife
> Dissolved the throbbing nerves of hope and

[   ] Triumph past. May angels guide you
to the blest regions of eternal day.
Where no rude blasts provoke the billowy roar
Where virtues kindred meet to part no more.

Fire

Fire ranked among the greatest fears of the crews of wooden sailing vessels.

Not only were vessels made of wood, but deck seams and rigging elements were coated

with highly flammable tar as protection against the elements. In addition, naval vessels

carried large stores of gunpowder, which demanded extreme caution in the use of fire

aboard ship. Although fire was greatly feared by mariners, it was not a popular subject

for memorials. Only one memorial recorded by the survey mentions a fire aboard ship.

This memorial is located in Highland Road Cemetery, Portsmouth, Hampshire, and

commemorates Captain Colin Andrew Campbell, RN, who died while on duty in 1869

(MR# 164; Figure 21). While fire played no part in Captain Campbell's death, a fire at

sea formed one of the significant events of Campbell's life, as described in his epitaph:

HE SERVED WITH DISTINCTION IN THE
CRIMEAN, CHINESE, AND ABYSSINIAN WARS
HE COMMANDED HMS BOMBAY WHEN SHE WAS
BURNT OFF THE COAST OF BRAZIL
14TH DEC^{R} 1864,
AND BY HIS PROMPT AND JUDICIOUS MEASURES
WAS THE MEANS OF SAVING THE LIVES OF
THE GREATER PART OF THE SHIP'S COMPANY

In addition to the epitcaph, Campbell's monument includes a bronze panel

depicting the fire aboard HMS *Bombay* (Figure 22). The illustration shows the ship

Figure 21. Monument for Captain Colin Andrew Campbell. MR# 164, Highland Road
Cemetery, Portsmouth, Hampshire.

Figure 22. Detail of MR# 164, depicting the burning of HMS *Bombay*.

engulfed in flames and smoke, while crowded boats lie close alongside rescuing

survivors. On the boat in the foreground one sailor can be seen hauling a shipmate

from the water. The fact that Captain Campbell's family chose this incident to depict

on his memorial illustrates the importance it had in his life. A fire aboard ship was a

horrific event, and one that often resulted in panic, as described by Edward Coxere's

account of a fire aboard his ship in Spithead in 1648, not far from the spot where

Campbell's monument would be erected two centuries later. Shortly after anchoring in

Spithead,

> …of a sudden the powder took fire in the gun-room and a sad blow was given,
> so that we seemed to be nothing but fire and smoke and expected to have been
> blown up into the air in a moment. So dreadful was it that the men which could
> swim leapt over board into the sea to swim to the boats that were at the stern of
> the ship. Everyone shifting for their lives, among the rest I was not a little
> concerned, but sufficiently scared, for my life lay at stake and it was 'Everyone
> shift for himself'; the captain was then no more regarded than the cook. (Coxere
> 1946: 7-8)

Upon reaching the boats, the panicked sailors rowed away from the ship as fast

as possible, leaving many seaman trapped aboard with no way to escape. Fortunately,

the trapped men managed to get the fire under control before it could reach the powder

magazine. Other accounts from the Age of Sail show that this response to fire was not

unusual. Eighteenth-century seaman Jack Cremer records a similar incident in

Plymouth harbor (Bellamy 1936: 49). In this case, a fire broke out in the boatswain's

storeroom, resulting in panic among the crew. Many sailors jumped overboard and

swam for shore, while two naval vessels anchored close by cut their cables and sailed

away as quickly as possible. Disaster was averted by a brave midshipman who entered

the room and extinguished the blaze. Edward Barlow witnessed a fire aboard the *St.*

Michael in 1691 in which the sailors exhibited the same behavior. Panicked men leaped overboard, while a few stayed behind and fought the fire. According to Barlow, several of those who jumped into the sea drowned before they could be picked up by other vessels. Given descriptions such as this, it is easy to see why Captain Campbell's family chose to emphasize the fire aboard HMS *Bombay* on his monument. A captain who could remain calm and save most of his crew when faced with the horror of fire at sea deserved recognition for his actions.

Sudden Death

Sudden death could come at any time, as shown by the gravestone of Franses W. Holmes from the Old Town cemetery in Stonington, Connecticut, who died aboard ship in 1801 at only 14 years of age (MR# 280). Holmes's epitaph clearly describes the impact of sudden death:

> Whilst sailing on the briney
> deep stern death
> Approach'd the blooming
> youth & stop'd his breath.

The same theme is expressed on the gravestone of two seafaring brothers from Old Burial Hill in Marblehead, Massachusetts (MR# 227). The elder brother, Benjamin Pitman, was lost at sea in 1815, while his younger brother John drowned twelve years later. In choosing a memorial for their sons, the Pitmans chose to emphasize the fragility of life:

> The rising morning can't assure
> That we shall end the day
> For death stands ready at the door

To snatch our lives away.

The brevity of life and the possibility of sudden demise is also expressed on the gravestone of seaman Robert Smith in Sculcoates Lane Cemetery in Hull (MR# 144), who "died suddenly" at age 27 in 1872. Smith's simple epitaph states, "Life how short! Eternity how long."

The fear of sudden death was also expressed in maritime mortuary symbolism. In Anglo-American funerary practices, the idea of the "life cut short" is typically shown symbolically by motifs such as broken columns, wilted flowers, and cut logs. Anglo-American mariners used some of these same symbols. Flowers, for instance, were noted on many maritime gravestones. Also, the churchyard of Plympton St. Mary's near Plymouth, England, holds a monument to three local brothers, all Royal Navy sailors who died in three separate incidents in various parts of the world (MR# 43). The monument is in the form of a broken column standing on a pedestal, a type common in late-nineteenth century cemeteries (Figure 23). The column symbolizes the life cut short.

In addition, sailors adapted prevailing mortuary ideas into maritime culture by choosing maritime symbols to express them. One of the best examples of this practice is the memorial for Bowyer Hamilton Guy Freer, a cadet in the Royal Navy who died in 1908, just six days shy of his fourteenth birthday (MR# 8). Cadet Freer's monument is in the form of an anchor resting against a pile of rocks, with the anchor chain looped up and over the top of the pile (Figure 24). One end of the chain is attached to the shank of the anchor, while the other end features a broken link hanging in space.

Figure 23. Broken-column monument. MR# 43, Plympton St. Mary, Plymouth, Devon.

Figure 24. Broken anchor chain symbolizing a life cut short at a young age. MR# 8, Royal Navy Cemetery, Haslar, Hampshire.

Examination revealed that the broken link was original rather than the result of damage. The end of the chain had been intentionally carved as a broken link, most likely to represent the life of Cadet Freer, which was tragically cut short.

The Shaping of Maritime Worldview

The dangers of maritime life elicited a unique set of responses among seafarers. The omnipresence of sudden death resulted in the development of a fatalistic attitude among mariners. Such an attitude can be seen in many firsthand accounts from the Age of Sail. Scholars have also noted the tendency for sailors to be fatalistic. In his article "Faith and Fate in Sea Disaster Ballads of Newfoundland Fishermen," Goldstein (1985) demonstrates that fatalism forms a major theme in the folksongs of Newfoundland maritime communities. Goldstein also notes, however, that this fatalistic attitude did not mean that sailors submit passively to fate. Rather, "the fatalism of Newfoundlanders is based on the idea that it is their lot to live with, fight with and to otherwise deal with the sea and related elements - not to give in to them but to recognize their force and power" (1985: 90). Rediker (1987: 185-186) makes the same point. Sailors accepted that they might die at any moment, but did not submit meekly. Ned Myers's messmate Tom Goldsmith eloquently expressed this never-say-die attitude moments after escaping from the foundering schooner *Scourge*: "'Ned,' says Tom, 'she's gone down with her colours flying, for her pennant came near getting a round turn about my body, and carrying me down with her. Davy [Jones] has made a good haul, and he gave us a close shave; but he didn't get you and me'" (Myers and

Cooper 1989: 86). In the maritime mind, life was a constant struggle against the forces of nature and man, with many narrow escapes.

The memorials recorded by the survey support the interpretations put forth by Goldstein and Rediker. Evidence reveals that Anglo-American mariners coped with the hazardous and uncertain nature of their profession by developing group values to deal with it.

Attention to Duty

Doing one's duty was one of the chief values for coping with the struggles of seafaring life. Nowhere is the sailor's attention to duty more poetically expressed than on the headstone of Adam F. Vannarp in Cedar Grove Cemetery, New London, Connecticut (MR# 259), who died in 1879:

> While we are securely and peacefully sleeping
> He stands at the helm his duty performs
> Now walking the deck and his painful watch keeping
> Or sits at the masthead mid perils and storms.

The epitaph acknowledges the dangers of maritime life, and makes it clear that the proper response to such challenges is the correct performance of duty, however difficult or painful it might be. Like Vannarp's tombstone, a nearly contemporary memorial in Liverpool also illustrates the theme of performing duty in the face of the dangers of the sea. One entire face of the Newlands family memorial (MR# 138) is dedicated to three sons, all of whom drowned in three separate incidents between 1865 and 1870. The epitaph for the three lost brothers states:

FROM DUTY THEY WERE CALL'D AWAY

TO WHERE THE STORMS OF LIFE ARE OE'R
AND MAY WE WITH SUBMISSION SAY
THEY ARE NOT LOST BUT GONE BEFORE.

Like Vannarp's gravestone, the Newlands memorial emphasizes mariners performing duty in the face of peril. In addition, it also includes the view of death as a release from the hardships of maritime life.

Duty was a value instilled into new sailors when they joined the maritime folk group, and the demonstration that one could perform one's duty correctly was necessary in order to be considered a full member of the group. In addition to learning group values from other group members, it is also possible that sailors learned proper memorialization practices from other maritime memorials. Three memorials from Falmouth, Cornwall, may illustrate this process. The earliest, from St. Mylor church (MR# 78), commemorates maintopman John Bullen of HMS *Crane*, who

was taken from the world of woe by falling
from the Main top Gallant Yard of that
Ship, when on duty, the 17th day of January
1846, off the Isles of Scilly;
Aged 23 Years.

Bullen's gravestone was erected by his shipmates, who chose to emphasize that he died "when on duty." Two decades later, a pair of memorials (MR#s 82 and 92) were dedicated at Falmouth that contain similar wording to Bullen's stone. Both commemorate cadets who were killed while serving aboard HMS *Ganges*, a Royal Navy training vessel stationed at Falmouth between 1866 and 1899. The first is located inside Mylor church, close to the spot of Bullen's gravestone. This floor slab memorializes John W. Griffin, boy of the 2nd class, who died in August 1867 "from

injuries received by a fall when in discharge of his duty" (MR# 82). Several miles

away, Falmouth Municipal Cemetery contains the grave of John Barry, another boy of

the 2nd class, who fell to his death almost exactly a year later (MR# 92). The phrase

"from injuries received by a fall when in discharge of his duty" is repeated on Barry's

stone, indicating that it likely came from the same source as Griffin's. The emphasis on

duty was undoubtedly drummed into the heads of the cadets during their training. In

addition, the emphasis on duty could also have been influenced by the earlier

gravestone of John Bullen, which lies in a prominent position on the floor of Mylor

church and could have been easily seen by cadets attending services there. The cadets

of the *Ganges* definitely had a connection with Mylor church, as shown by the fact that

when they decided to erect a monument to all of their comrades who had died while in

training, the obelisk was placed in Mylor churchyard (MR# 89; Figure 25).

Courage

Sailors expected their shipmates to stand firm in the face of adversity. Several

memorials express the bravery shown by mariners during battle. At St. Mylor, a

plaque commemorates Edward Bayntum Yescombe, commander of the *King George*

packet, who "lost his life in bravely defending his ship against the enemy" in August

1803 (MR# 74). Another wall plaque in the same church describes the courage of

Captain John Haswell, RN, who died in July 1811 (MR# 72). Although Haswell did

not die in action, his memorial emphasizes his bravery in several engagements.

American sailors also valued courage. Old Burial Hill in Marblehead, Massachusetts,

Figure 25. HMS *Ganges* monument. MR# 89, St. Mylor, Cornwall.

contains the grave of Captain Joseph Lindsay, USN, who died in 1826 (MR# 224).

Lindsay's family chose to emphasize his service to his country in the War of 1812. His

epitaph emphasizes the "coolness, skill, & bravery" that Lindsay exhibited as sailing

master of the schooner *Ticonderoga* during the Battle of Plattsburg Bay on Lake

Champlain in September 1814. Old Burial Hill is also the final resting place for

another U.S. Navy veteran of the War of 1812, James Dennis Hammond, who was

wounded when the USS *Constitution* defeated HMS *Java* in December 1812 (MR#

367).

Figure 26. Monument for Midshipman Thomas Barratt Powers, RN, who was killed in the War of 1812. The flags were recent, and may have been placed on the Fourth of July. MR# 290, Evergreen Cemetery, Stonington, Connecticut.

Group Loyalty

High context folk groups such as sailors place particular emphasis on loyalty to other group members. The memorials recorded by the survey illustrate several ways in which group loyalty could be expressed in memorial practices. In situations where a sailor died far from home and family, it was common for his shipmates to erect a memorial to him. An excellent example of this practice is the monument for Royal Navy Midshipman Thomas Barratt Powers of HMS *Superb*, who was killed in action

during a British attack on Stonington, Connecticut in July 1814 (MR# 290). The

memorial was erected by the captain and officers of Powers's ship, who dedicated it as

a "tribute of respect and esteem." This idea lives on. When the Maritime Memorials

Survey recorded Powers's monument in August 2002, we noted that a pair of flags, one

British and one American, had recently been planted at the base of the monument

(Figure 26). In Liverpool, fellow American ship masters and English friends erected a

monument to commemorate Elisha Lindsay Halsey of Charleston, South Carolina, who

died aboard his ship in the Bay of Biscay (MR# 115). Halsey's monument stands out in

St. James's cemetery because it includes an American flag and American eagle (Figure

27). Other examples of mariners erecting memorials to honor fallen shipmates include

Figure 27. Monument for merchant captain Elisha Lindsay Halsey, with an American
flag and eagle. MR# 115, St. James's Cemetery, Liverpool.

MR# 6, which commemorates a Royal Marine who died at Haslar Hospital from wounds received during the capture of Benin City; MR# 59, erected by members of the Royal Navy Ordnance Department at Devonport to honor a fallen comrade; and MR# 79, a gravestone erected by the ship's company of HMS *Ganges* to commemorate shipmate Charles Beck, who died April 29, 1893, and his wife Mary Ann, who passed away only three days later.

Providing a grave for other mariners applied even in the case of enemies. The British, for example, gave a proper burial and erected a headstone to honor William Henry Allen, commander of the U.S. brig *Argus*, who died of wounds received when his vessel was captured by the British brig *Pelican* in August 1813 (MR# 63). The gravestone also commemorates U.S. Navy midshipman Richard Delphey, who was killed in the same engagement. Allen's stone, while erected during a time of war between Great Britain and the United States, later came to symbolize the unity of the two countries (Northan 1976). In 1930, the United States Daughters of 1812, in appreciation of the respect shown to Allen and Delphey by the British, restored the doorway of the chapel. As part of this process Allen's headstone was remounted as part of a new monument as well (Figure 28).

Another way that sailors took care of one another was to pay for memorials for a deceased shipmate's family. The churchyard of All Saints church in Wyke Regis contains the gravestone of British seaman John Henry, sailmaker aboard HMS *Danae*, who died in Cuba in December 1873 (MR# 24). The stone was dedicated "in loving

Figure 28. Gravestone of William Henry Allen, restored and place in a monument to the right of the chapel door. MR# 63, St. Andrew's, Plymouth, Devon.

remembrance" by Henry's parents, who lived in nearby Weymouth, but it was erected by the officers and crew of the *Danae*. At St. Budeaux in Devonport, the officers and workmen of Devonport dockyard erected a gravestone for Thomas Atwill, who was accidentally killed there in 1901 (MR# 57). The two stanzas of Atwill's epitaph express the sentiments of both colleagues and his wife. The first stanza reads:

YES WE MISS HIM O HOW SADLY
NONE BUT ACHING HEARTS CAN TELL
EARTH HAS LOST HIM, HEAVEN HAS FOUND HIM:
JESUS DOETH ALL THINGS WELL.

While the first stanza, with its sentiment of "yes we miss him," could indicate a tribute from his colleagues as well as his family, the sentiment expressed in the second stanza of the epitaph is clearly from Atwill's wife:

SLEEP ON DEAR HUSBAND AND TAKE THY REST
FOR GOD HAS CALLED WHEN HE THOUGHT BEST.
THE LOSS IS GREAT THAT WE SUSTAIN
BUT IN HEAVEN WE HOPE TO MEET AGAIN.

A similar pattern is seen on the gravestone of Thomas Arthur Bennett, First Class Petty Officer, RN, who died at the Royal Navy Hospital Haslar in 1915 and was interred in the nearby Royal Navy Cemetery (MR# 10). Bennett's stone stands out from those around it because it is in a form commonly found in civilian cemeteries, yet it is placed in the middle of a section of standard military issued gravestones (Figure 29). It appears that Bennett's widow wanted something more personal than an official military gravestone, but did not possess the financial means to pay for it. The bottom of the stone states that it was erected by "His late shipmates, HMS *Monarch*," but the dedication and epitaph are clearly from his wife. The stone is dedicated to "my devoted husband," while the epitaph mournfully states,

SAFELY AT NIGHT THE STARS ARE GLEAMING,
OVER A SILENT GRAVE,
ONE I LOVED BUT COULD NOT SAVE,
DEEP WITHIN MY HEART CONCEALED.

Self Sacrifice

Looking out for other group members included putting one's own life in danger if necessary in order to save a brother tar. At the church of St. Mary in Plympton, near Plymouth, a monument commemorates Edward F. Tucker of HMS *Jackal*, who "died while drowning in attempting to save his shipmate" in 1895 (MR# 43). This characteristic of British seamen is shown most eloquently by a monument in Kingston

Figure 29. Thomas Bennett's civilian-style gravestone, set amidst standard military stones. MR# 10, Royal Navy Cemetery, Haslar, Hampshire.

Road Cemetery in Portsmouth (MR# 175). This cross is prominently situated next to one of the main paths near the entrance to the cemetery, yet today it is easily passed by because it is so heavily overgrown with ivy (Figure 30). It is worth taking the time to push back the tangle and read the inscription, however, for this monument records a story of gallantry in which eleven sailors from HMS *Ariadne* died trying to save one. After listing the names of the eleven who were lost, the inscription provides the full story of the tragic event:

ON THE 8TH MARCH 1872 OFF THE COAST OF PORTUGAL,
WHEN THE SHIP WAS PROCEEDING TO GIBRALTAR, WERE CAPSIZED
IN THEIR CUTTER AND DROWNED WHILST BRAVELY ATTEMPTING IN A
HEAVY SEA TO RESCUE AN UNFORTUNATE SHIPMATE WHO HAD FALLEN
OVERBOARD

Figure 30. Monument for eleven sailors from HMS *Ariadne* who drowned while attempting to save a shipmate who had fallen overboard. MR# 175, Kingston Road Cemetery, Portsmouth, Hampshire.

Sacrifices such as this were not uncommon. The grave of Lieutenant William

Graves in the Royal Navy Cemetery, Haslar, also records his act of sacrifice to save his

shipmates (MR# 7). Lieutanant Graves

LOST HIS LIFE BY DROWNING
IN THE DISASTROUS COLLISION IN THE SOLENT
APRIL 25TH 1908
HIS LAST ACT WAS TO CARRY OUT SINGLE
HANDED HIS CAPTAIN'S ORDER, TO LET GO THE
STARBOARD ANCHOR, THEREBY SAVING THE

LIVES OF MANY AT THE SACRIFICE OF HIS OWN.

Willingness to sacrifice one's own life for the sake of shipmates was a value held in common by American sailors as well. Two examples provide evidence of this value among American seamen. In Cedar Grove Cemetery, New London, Connecticut, the gravestone of B.F. Skinner (MR# 262) describes his loss off Cape Hatteras in March 1865 while attempting to rescue survivors from the sunken steamer *General Lyon*. A similar fate befell seamen Fredric A. Akin. Akin, whose gravestone is in the Rural Cemetery in New Bedford, Massachusetts, was "one of the Heroes who was drowned at Cuttyhunk while trying to save the lives of the crew of the Brig *Aquatic*" in February 1893 (MR# 324).

Pride

Sailors developed a fierce pride that they were able to endure the hardships of maritime life. Nowhere is this better shown than on the simple gravestone of Able Seamen William Bolton in St. James's Cemetery, Liverpool (MR# 123). Bolton died in 1850 at age 67, and his family chose to emphasize an event from Bolton's younger life when they erected his gravestone. The inscription proudly proclaims, "deceased was one of the British Seamen who fought at the Memorable Battle of Trafalgar on Board of H.M.S. Timerara." No doubt Bolton had regaled his family over the years with tales of his service in the Navy, and his account of his part in the battle. Bolton had every reason to be proud, as HMS *Téméraire* was engaged in the thickest of the fighting, for which the ship earned the nickname "the fighting *Téméraire*" (Marcus 1971). Major

General Elias Lawrence of the Royal Marines, whose grave lies in the churchyard of

St. Budeaux, Devonport, also emphasized his presence at Trafalgar (MR# 60).

Summary

Mariners faced many dangers at sea. The worst of these were natural forces,

chiefly the perils of rocks and storms. While it is likely that illness probably killed

more mariners before their time than any other single factor, it was the awesome power

of nature that captured the minds of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sailors. Their

fear of sudden death by shipwreck and drowning form a noteworthy theme in maritime

memorialization. This is illustrated by the number of memorials that deal with death

by natural forces and sudden death. The forces of nature and the fear of accidental

death are also prominent in historical accounts from the Age of Sail. Furthermore,

many sea chanteys deal with these themes as well.

In response to the dangers of the sea, the maritime folk group developed a set of

values that stressed a fatalistic outlook on life, and close teamwork with fellow sailors

to overcome nature's perils. Despite a group ethos that stressed teamwork to fight the

forces of nature, many sailors lost the struggle. Countless mariners died at sea of

accidents or disease, were lost on vessels that foundered, or were drowned when their

ships were forced onto lee shores. The rituals that sailors and other members of

maritime communities developed to deal with these types of losses form the subject of

the next two chapters. Chapter 7 examines the ritual of burial at sea, demonstrating

how it was a performance used to separate the dead mariner from shipboard society and

at the same time re-create the social order aboard ship that had been disrupted by death.

Chapter 8 looks at the ways that sailors and maritime communities memorialized those

who died at sea or on land far away. Both of these chapters share a common theme:

the ultimate hollowness and unsatisfactory nature of trying to cope with the deaths of

those who had no earthly grave.

CHAPTER VII

"THE NATURAL SEPULCHRE OF A SAILOR":

BURIAL AT SEA AS RITUAL PERFORMANCE

In February 1667, as His Majesty's ship *Monmouth* rode at anchor in the Downs, Captain Sir Thomas Allin recorded the following entry in his journal: "8 *Saturday*. The wind westerly, handsome weather, inclining to the southerboard. We sent for a boat-load of water. Buried one Stephen Wright" (Anderson 1940: 7). The brevity of Allin's account, typical of many references to burial at sea during the Age of Sail, belies the importance of this ritual. Seven of the memorials recorded during the survey specifically state that the commemorated sailor was buried at sea. In addition, as discussed in the preceding chapter, there is good reason to believe that most of the 44 sailors listed as "died at sea" were also buried there. As important as it was for family and friends back home, the burial at sea ceremony was also a necessary ritual for those aboard ship. Fortunately, a few more detailed descriptions of burial at sea services have been preserved from the Age of Sail, allowing interpretations to be made about the structure and meaning of the burial at sea ritual. The description of Frederick Perry, an officer aboard the American clipper ship *Continental* in 1876, provides one of the most detailed descriptions of the process of burying a person at sea, and is worth quoting in full:

> His body was reverently carried into the carpenter's shop and was laid out on the bench. The sailmaker and the carpenter prepared it for burial by washing and dressing him up in his best suit of "go-ashore" clothes, then sewing him up in a heavy piece of new canvas for a shroud, and with a couple

of old iron cable shackles fastened at his feet, they laid the body on the sliding board, covered with the ship's ensign, to await burial.

At eight bells, in the morning watch, i.e. at 8 a.m., all hands were mustered to bury the dead. The ensign was run up half-way to the monkey gaff, the main-yards were backed, and the body of poor Louie, lying on the sliding board covered by the flag, and perched upon the shoulders of four of his watch-mates, was solemnly brought aft to the lee gangway and placed with the foot of the board resting on the ship's rail.

It was a bleak, raw, cold morning. The heavy leaden clouds overhead seemed to have drawn the edges of the dark-hued canopy that enshrouded us closer to the horizon. The sound of the wind shrieking through the rigging and the flapping of sails and creaking of spars as we rolled and tossed in the heavy sea added a weird note somewhat like the wail of innumerable lost souls already gone before.

The rough, hardy crew, standing with uncovered heads in the withering gale, solemnly gathered around the body at the ship's side. The captain, advancing to the break of the poop, with Prayer-book in hand, began in a tremulous voice to read: "I am the resurrection and the life." As these solemn words sounded above the whistling winds which broke in upon the silence of the surrounding crew, you could see an honest tear coursing down the cheeks of most of the rough, rugged faces, tanned by the wind and moist with flying spray. As the captain came to the words: "We commit this body to the deep," the inboard end of the sliding board was raised and the body slid out, feet first, from under the ensign and, with a splash, disappeared beneath the angry waves.

For just a second all hands stood awestruck and silent, and as I cast my eye towards Foley, the forecastle bully, he seemed greatly embarrassed at being discovered in the act of withdrawing his rough hand from wiping something besides salt spume from his eyes.

My own thoughts went out in sympathy to that poor mother sitting desolate and alone way up in Mississippi River Valley, waiting and watching in vain for her boy who would never return.

"Why in hell don't you fill away the main-yard, sir?" bawled the captain from the quarter-deck, thereby reminding me that we were still on a sailing ship and there was no time to waste with wandering thoughts or sentiment when the wind, blowing fair, would carry us swiftly to our destined port.

We then filled away, leaving the remains of Louie in the keeping of the sea-gulls and three large albatross, soaring gracefully in the dull grey sky overhead, with their huge wings spread out as though pronouncing a final benediction on the departed soul. (It is a sailor's superstition that these birds are the reincarnated spirits of departed sea captains lost in the bleak, stormy region of Cape Horn.) (Perry 1927: 70-72)

Burial at sea was a ritual that few non-mariners ever witnessed, but one whose elements they would have instantly recognized if they had. Structurally, burial at sea was simply the funeral service used on land adapted to a maritime setting. Most of the elements in the ritual - preparing the corpse, transporting it to the grave site, and holding a graveside service - occurred in the same order as on land. Nevertheless, the ritual also included unique elements that reflected both the maritime environment where the ceremony took place and the unique traditions and beliefs of the maritime folk group.

News of a sailor's death soon spread to the entire shipboard community. In the case of accidents such as falling from aloft or drowning, many seamen might witness their shipmate's death. Other forms of dying were not so public. Those who succumbed to illness usually spent their last moments under the care of the surgeon below decks. Still, their passing would not go unnoticed for long. It was customary for the surgeon to report any death to the officer of the watch, who would then inform the captain (Mack & Connell 1980: 176-177). As on land, a death at sea caused a disruption in the social life of the community. Everyone aboard ship had to "pull his own weight," so a death resulted in more work for those who remained. The extent to which routine and workload was disrupted, of course, varied according to the deceased's rank and position. In addition, the death of a shipmate could be emotionally traumatic for other sailors, particularly the deceased's messmates, who were often his closest friends. Sailors were a high-context folk group, and feelings ran strong. In the

passage by Perry quoted above, for instance, this sense of emotional trauma is clear. Even a man known to be a bully was affected.

Above all else came the problem of the corpse. In accordance with Anglo-American tradition, the deceased's body had to be disposed of properly. In the case of those lost overboard, where a body was never recovered, the deceased's shipmates were spared the necessity of dealing with a corpse. This type of death, however, created another set of problems, which will be discussed in the following chapter. Analysis of burial at sea accounts reveals that the ritual of burial at sea was designed to comfort shipmates, restore social cohesion, and most importantly, lay the dead properly to rest so that the safety of the vessel and crew would not be endangered.

Where to Bury the Body: At Sea or Ashore?

Accounts from the Age of Sail reveal that burial on land was preferable to burial in the sea and would be performed if practical. In his *Journal*, Edward Barlow (1934) recorded two instances where people were interred ashore even though it would have been easier to bury them in the water. In one instance, the captain's wife, who was aboard with her husband, died while the ship lay in Grimesby Roads near Hull. She was taken ashore and buried at Grimesby church (Barlow 1934: 133). On a later voyage, the ship's carpenter died in Naples. Laws forbid the burial of foreigners within the city, so the easiest thing for the ship's company to do would have been to bury the carpenter at sea. Instead, Barlow and a party of seamen took the carpenter's body several miles away from Naples and buried him next to the sea (Barlow 1934: 276).

This treatment of the carpenter shows that burials on shore, when it was possible to do them, were not limited to high-status individuals. The carpenter, while higher in rank than a common sailor, was only a petty officer. Further evidence that burials on land were afforded to all when practical comes from Sam Noble. Noble (1925: 189-191) describes the elaborate funeral arrangements, procession, and burial service performed for an ordinary seaman who drowned at St. Helena.

The examples described above all deal with vessels in port. Retaining a body on a vessel at sea, however, was another matter. Before the development of embalming in the mid-nineteenth century and refrigeration, it was not possible to preserve a body for an extended period of time. Since the Middle Ages, bodies of wealthy or high-status individuals who died away from home were sometimes transported home for burial. One method of preserving the corpse for its journey was by opening the corpse, removing the internal organs, treating the cavity with vinegar, and packing it with salt (Horrox 1999: 99). Such extended preparations were not usually possible aboard ships at sea.

Practical considerations aside, maritime superstition held that it was bad luck to have a corpse aboard ship. Hall (1895: 294) claimed that the reason for the superstition was that the corpse reminded sailors of their own mortality, which was never far away at sea. Whatever the reason, it was widely believed that the presence of a corpse on board would cause storms or adverse winds (Bassett 1971: 135-138; Beck 1972: 283). Hall (1895: 294) mentions that mariners also believed that sharks would follow any vessel with a dead body aboard. This belief dates back at least to the Medieval period,

as Bassett (1971: 136-137) cites numerous references to the belief in Medieval Europe. Like any superstition, belief in the bad luck caused by a corpse had its detractors. As far back as 1639, the author of "A Helpe to Memory and Discourse" argued that the belief had no validity (Bassett 1971: 136). Nevertheless, the belief remained a part of maritime lore well into the twentieth century. Beck (1972: 283) cites a case in Scotland where a man died on a small offshore island and it took eight days to find a vessel to transport his remains to the mainland for burial because no sailor wanted to sail with a corpse aboard ship.

Despite difficulties due to preservation and superstitions, there were cases when bodies were kept until they could be buried on land. Usually, these were high-status individuals such as admirals or captains. The most famous of these is probably Admiral Horatio Nelson, who was brought back to England for burial following his death at the Battle of Trafalgar in October 1805. Four memorials recorded by the Maritime Memorials Survey deal with bodies that were returned home for burial. Three of these were high-status individuals. A plaque in St. Budeaux church, Plymouth, memorializes Sir Thomas Byard, who died at sea while commanding HMS *Foudroyant* in October 1798 (MR# 62). The inscription on his memorial states that Byard's body was brought home and buried in a vault in the church, next to his teenage daughter who had died four years previously. Byard's wife Susanna joined her family upon her death ten years later.

Portsmouth, New Hampshire merchant George Boyd died on his way home from England in October 1787, two days before his vessel arrived at Portsmouth (MR

#257). While the inscription on Mr. Boyd's tomb does not specifically state that his body was returned for burial, it seems likely that this was in fact the case because his grave is a sarcophagus rather than a simple headstone. Also, as the vessel was only two days out from its home port, there would have been no need to preserve the body for very long. Finally, as a merchant, Boyd was of high enough social standing that it would be likely that his body was brought ashore.

By far the most amazing of the memorials that describes a body being brought home for burial is that of Captain John Norman of Liverpool (MR #126). Norman's story is one of the nine recorded on the family gravestone in St. James's Cemetery, Liverpool. After detailing the names of four other family members, including his mother, the gravestone states:

Also CAPT^{N} JOHN NORMAN,
son of the above Mary Norman
who died on board the Ship "John Norman"
in the China Sea on his homeward voyage
from Foochow to London,
August 31st 1861, Aged 52 Years
His remains were brought to England
by his Wife and interred here
February 9th 1862

Captain Norman's wife Frances, the last person to be added to the stone following her death in 1886, must have been an extremely determined woman to bring his body halfway around the world in the face of prevailing maritime superstitions against such a practice. The fact that she was able to do so was most likely due to her husband's position as captain of the vessel.

The only exception to the rule that only the bodies of high-status individuals were kept on board until the vessel made port comes from St. Mylor church in Cornwall. A slab marker on the floor of the church marks the grave of John Bullen, a main top man aboard HMS *Crane*, who died by falling from the main topgallant yard of that vessel in January 1846 (MR# 78). The gravestone clearly states that Bullen's remains were buried in the church rather than at sea. In this case, however, the accident occurred while the *Crane* was off the Isles of Scilly, a distance of less than 100 miles from Falmouth. It is likely, therefore, that Bullen's body was kept aboard because the vessel was approaching port.

Structure of the Burial at Sea Ritual

Preparing the Body for Burial

As on land, the first step in the ritual was to prepare the body for burial. This process began with washing the body. Douglas (1966) discusses the reasons for washing bodies before burial. Many cultures view dead bodies as unclean objects. The dead body exists in a liminal state, neither living nor properly incorporated into the realm of the dead. As Douglas points out, objects in liminal states are sources of pollution and are therefore dangerous to the community. One of the reasons for washing a dead body is to remove impurities and prevent pollution from spreading to other members of the group. In addition, of course, cleaning the body prior to burial is thought of as a gesture of respect in Anglo-American funerary tradition. On land, female relatives of the deceased were usually responsible for preparing the body

(Richardson 2000: 17). Most accounts of burial at sea mention that the washing of the body of a deceased sailor was done by his messmates. In *White Jacket*, for example, Melville (1950: 316) mentions drawing a bucket of sea water to bathe his dead messmate. The messmates, who were typically the deceased's closest friends aboard ship, took the place of the closest friends and relatives on land. The performance of washing by the deceased's messmates highlights the fact that in the maritime worldview, one's messmates were considered one's closest family. This fact is further illustrated by a common maritime euphemism for death. When a sailor died, it was said that he "lost the number of his mess." As will be seen below, the messmates continued to perform the dominant role throughout the remainder of the funeral ritual.

After bathing, the dead sailor was dressed. Once again, this was commonly done by the deceased's messmates. In Perry's account quoted at the beginning of the chapter, the deceased was dressed in his best suit of clothing. Other accounts make it clear that this was the usual practice. In *White Jacket*, the dead sailor was dressed in a "white frock, trowsers, and neckerchief," which sounds like the shore-going rig of a man-of-war's man (Melville 1950: 316). The custom of burying dead sailors in their best clothes mirrors traditional practices on land; even today, it is still customary for the dead to be formally attired. The use of formal clothing is another important aspect of the burial ritual because it marks a rite of separation of the dead from the living. Funeral rites take both the living and the dead from the world of the profane to the realm of the sacred. According to Leach (2000), shifts from the profane to the sacred are typically accompanied by the wearing of formal attire. Dressing the corpse

formally, and the use of formal attire by mourners as well, represents one stage in the proper placement of the dead.

With the corpse washed and dressed, the next step was to place the body into some sort of container. By the late seventeenth century, coffins had come into general use on land (Gittings 1999: 169-170). Aboard ship, however, coffins were typically reserved for high-status individuals. I know of no accounts from the Age of Sail that mention common sailors being buried in coffins, although references were found to merchants or other elites being accorded the privilege. Instead of wooden coffins, most sailors were simply wrapped in shrouds. Shrouds had been utilized on land for the burial of most people until the late seventeenth century, so their use aboard ship was simply the continuation of another land-based tradition. A sailor's shroud might consist simply of a spare piece of canvas, as described by Perry above. Pieces of old sails were also used. The most popular reference, however, is to shrouding the dead seaman inside his own hammock. Hammocks had been the most common form of bedding for sailors since the seventeenth century, especially aboard naval vessels, which had large crews and limited space. In addition to being a practical solution to the need for a shroud, hammocks were likely employed for burial for two other reasons. First, many sailors were superstitious of wearing a dead man's clothes, and it would be natural for this taboo to be applied to a deceased person's hammock as well. Also, the hammock would have been seen as an appropriate burial shroud because of its association with sleeping. Especially in the nineteenth century, sleep was a popular metaphor for death. Gravemarkers in the shape of beds and inscriptions describing the person as "asleep"

were common during the nineteenth century (Tarlow 1999: 133-136). Sailors also thought of their hammocks as their own private space, a place of comfort and repose, as illustrated by a description in Sam Noble's account. After burying a shipmate on the island of St. Helena, Noble (1925: 191) states "we marched away, leaving our shipmate to his long, last sleep in a little hollow of the hill (not unlike a hammock), encompassed on all sides by the broad waters of the Atlantic." Noble's description makes clear the congruence in the maritime mind between sleeping in one's hammock and sleeping in death. It also shows that the hammock was considered a proper place for a sailor to sleep until the Resurrection.

The maritime environment required the use of one item that was not necessary on land. In order for the body to reach its proper resting place on the seabed, it had to be weighted down. The classic item used to weight bodies for sea burial was two round cannon shot, placed at the foot of the corpse. During the Age of Sail, it was common for merchants vessels as well as naval ones to carry cannon, so cannon balls would have been found on most vessels of the period. Although two round shot were the classic weight listed in many accounts, any heavy object would do. As described by Perry, the weight might consist simply of pieces of discarded iron shackles. In *John Adams*, McCullough (2001: 186) describes the death of Lieutenant William Barron due to the bursting of a cannon aboard USS *Boston*. A large fragment of the cannon that burst and killed him was used to weight Barron's coffin.

The manner of employing weights to bury bodies at sea contributed to the symbolic separation of the dead from the living. Placing the weights at the foot of the

corpse would have made the body sink feet first. This seems to be a maritime adaptation of a rite of separation used on land. On land, it was customary in Anglo-American practice to always keep the corpse facing away from its former dwelling as it was being taken to the cemetery for burial (Richardson 1993: 95). The corpse was always carried out of the house feet first, an orientation that remained the same during the trip to the cemetery. This practice symbolically represented the one-way nature of the corpse's voyage. In addition to providing symbolic separation of the corpse from its former home and family, the practice was thought to prevent the deceased's spirit from being able to return home to haunt the living. It seems likely that the placement of weights at the foot of the corpse in the burial at sea ceremony serves the same purpose. The corpse would have sunk feet first, with the head facing outward and away from the vessel. This practice would have been one way of assuring the living that the dead would not return, which, as we will see later, was a very important part of the maritime worldview.

After the shroud was weighted, it was time to sew it up. On land, the nailing shut of the coffin lid formed another barrier of separation between the living and the dead (Richardson 1993: 94-95), and it seems likely that sewing the body in its shroud served a similar function aboard ship. Hall (1895: 295) states that it was customary for extra clothes and bedding to be placed inside the shroud before it was sewn up, "apparently to prevent the form being too much seen." Making the shroud look less like a human body was another way of emphasizing the increasing separation between the dead and the living.

Sewing the body in its shroud was usually done by the sailmaker or his mates, who sometimes practiced a unique maritime tradition. When the body was sewn into its shroud, it was customary to take the last stitch through the nose of the deceased. Various explanations have been advanced regarding the origin and meaning of this custom. Bradley (1894: 68-69) believed that the tradition derived from the Norse practice of burying bodies with wooden stakes through their breasts in order to prevent the corpse from coming back to life. This practice is probably related to the custom of preventing the return of revenants (spirits that return from the dead) such as vampires by driving a stake through the heart (Barber 1988). Bradley also described a similar tradition among Arab sailors, who would break the bones of a deceased shipmate before disposing of the body overboard to prevent the person's ghost from returning to haunt the ship. Although it is doubtful that the tradition practiced among eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Anglo-American sailors can be traced directly to either the Norse or Arab traditions, it does seem to have had a similar meaning. In *White Jacket* (Melville 1950: 317-319), two old salts discuss the pros and cons of the nasal stitch. One holds the view that the stitch needs to be taken in order for the dead to rest peacefully. His companion, on the other hand, argues that the dead do not like the stitch through their noses, and that doing so will cause the deceased's ghost to return and haunt the ship. Much of *White Jacket*, first published in 1850, describes the abusive practices prevalent aboard ships of the period. Although Melville included the discussion of the nasal stitch to point out the barbarity of the tradition and put forth his own view that it should be stopped, it nonetheless seems likely that he has touched

upon the main themes involved with the issue. Some saw it as a necessary practice in order to allow the dead to rest, while others believed that it was the custom itself that caused hauntings. This ambiguity about the nature of the dead is a common theme in British views toward death, as discussed by Richardson (1993: 98).

It is likely that the custom of taking the last stitch through the nose had both practical and symbolic aspects. On the one hand, the nasal stitch served a practical purpose: it was thought that the pain of the needle would revive a person who appeared to be dead but who might really only be unconscious. During the nineteenth century, the fear of being buried alive was common in England and America (Litten 1991: 166-167). One of the reasons for conducting a wake or other vigil with the corpse prior to burial was to make sure that the person actually was dead. The term "wake" itself comes from the idea that if the person was not dead, the lights and loud noises that accompany the proceedings would cause the person to awaken. At the same time, it was believed that the lights and commotion of the wake would help frighten away evil spirits. Like wakes on land, the custom of the last stitch probably served dual functions, a practical one intended to ensure that the person really was dead, and a symbolic one whose purpose was to allow the spirit to rest at peace and not return to haunt his former shipmates.

The tradition of taking the last stitch through the nose of a deceased sailor illustrates one aspect of the maritime worldview, the fear of ghosts. Although death was a serious subject, another aspect of the maritime worldview was to treat death

humorously, as illustrated by the following story from Beck's *Folklore and the Sea* (1972: 285):

> On a certain island in Maine an old woman died in the middle of winter. The ground was hard and the men were reluctant to dig the grave. Moreover, it was discovered that no wood was available for a coffin, so the old lady lay stretched out in the corner while friends and relatives decided what would be best to do. Eventually, someone suggested, "Why not bury her in the schooner's foresail?" "Too big," was the reply. "We could two-reef it." Accordingly the foresail was double-reefed and the corpse sewed into it. But before any more could be done the granddaughter began to cry bitterly. "I n-never thought to s-see the day that poor old g-granny would go through hell in a t-two-reef fors'l."

This story illustrates several unique perspectives of the maritime folk group. For one, one must understand maritime technology enough to know that reefing a sail is the act of shortening it so that it does not catch as much wind. This is usually done to prevent the sail from being damaged during high winds. The humor comes from the fact that the sailors believed that it would be necessary to shorten sail in order to hold the tiny body of the grandmother. Beck (1972: 285-286) also mentions an English version of this story, where lumps of coal are used to weigh down a passenger who is to be buried at sea. The punchline of this joke is, "I never thought that the old lady would have to carry her own coal to hell." In both of these stories the brunt of the humor falls upon non-mariners: one a grandmother and the other a ship's passenger. Mariners employ humor against outsiders just as members of other folk groups do.

Once the body had been sewn inside its shroud, it was customary to cover it with the national flag. Mack and Connell (1980: 175) state that this is done on modern naval vessels to show that the person died in the service of his or her country. Perry and others make clear, however, that in the days of sail the practice was not limited to

warships. In addition to a mark of respect, covering the corpse with a flag would have served as another boundary layer between the living and the dead. As such, this practice continued the process of separating the deceased from his former shipmates.

Lying in State

After the preparation of the body for burial was complete, it was customary for the body to lie in state for a period before burial. On land, the body was usually laid out in the deceased's home, typically in the front room or parlor. The length of time before the funeral varied, but was usually only a few days and rarely as long as a week (Litten 1991). During this time, family and friends could gather to pay last respects to the deceased. It was also customary for a family member or friend to conduct an all-night vigil with the body. Candles were burned throughout the night, as it was generally believed that light helped deter evil spirits (Richardson 1993: 94). For high-status individuals, such as royalty or state officials, lying in state might take place at a cathedral or government building, and the period might be as much as a week. During this time, the public could come by to pay respects to the deceased. Aboard ship, the period before burial mirrored the social structure on land. Hall (1895: 295) states that the bodies of common sailors were usually taken up to the main deck and placed immediately abaft the mainmast to await burial. Melville (1950: 316) also mentions carrying the body up to the main deck, but in this case the body was placed between two cannon. Having the body in the open air on deck would be agreeable because it would allow the deceased's spirit to fly away from the body. On land, it was customary

for a window to be left open in the room of the house where the body lay. The door to the room was also kept open. It was considered bad luck to close the door or window, because that might allow the dead person's spirit to become trapped in the house (Richardson 1993: 93). For sailors raised to this custom on land, the deck of the ship would no doubt be seen as the best location to place the corpse before burial, because having it in the open air would fulfill the need the give the spirit access to fly away. It is also likely that sailors did not want a dead body kept below decks in their sleeping area. It was also customary aboard ship for one or more of the deceased's messmates or watchmates to stay with the body until time for the funeral. Once again, the messmates, the closest people to the deceased, fulfilled the function performed by family and close friends ashore.

Unlike on land, however, the period of lying in state before burial was usually much shorter at sea. In most cases, burial services were conducted within 24 hours of the person's death. There were several reasons for this. First, as already mentioned, sailors had a superstition against having a corpse on board. They would have wanted to conduct the funeral as quickly as possible. In addition, the lack of means for preservation would have prevented keeping the corpse for a long period before odors associated with decay became intolerable. Finally, there was no reason for an extended period of visitation, because the relatively small population aboard ship would not need a lengthy period in order to pay last respects, nor would relatives need time to travel from far away.

Exceptions to the rules of having a short lying-in-state period and keeping the body on deck sometimes occurred in the case of high-status individuals. As on land, high-status individuals were sometimes afforded lengthier periods of waiting before the funeral. When the captain of James Gardner's ship died in the Mediterranean, the body was laid out in the great cabin at the stern of the ship. This was an area usually off-limits to ordinary sailors. In this case, however, an exception was made:

> The ship's company paid respect to his memory; they divided their black silk handkerchiefs, and wore one part round their hats and the other round their arms, and requested they might see the corpse before the interment; which request was granted, and they walked through the cabin in ranks and bowed to the coffin while passing, and most of them in tears - a sight truly impressive. (Gardner 1955: 107)

The captain's funeral, with black mourning emblems, coffin, and parade of visitors, mirrored that of important personages on land.

The Funeral Service

On land, the funeral began with a procession from the deceased's house to the churchyard or cemetery. The deceased's house and the houses of neighbors were often decorated in black as symbols of mourning. Mourning decorations served to highlight the reversal of the normal order. At sea, symbolic reversals were common as well. The ship would be stopped for the burial service, which was a reversal of the normal order because a ship at sea was usually moving. The vessel's yards would be cockbilled, meaning that some would have their ends tilted up while others were tilted down. Sailors had an extreme dislike for yards not being in perfect horizontal trim, and any degree of tilting looked unseamanlike to the nautical mind. To deliberately

cockbill the yards was an important deviation that contrasted sharply with ordinary practice. Finally, the most widely recognized of symbolic reversal was to fly the flag at half mast. All of these things emphasized the funeral as an event that was not part of a ship's ordinary routine. It was a period of sacred time.

The procession was a critical part of the symbolic separation of the dead from the living. Richardson (1993: 96-97) describes some of the ways that funeral processions were used to separate the dead from the living. Processions sometimes took roundabout routes to the graveyard in the hopes that the spirit would not be able to find its way back to haunt its former abode. In addition, stops were usually made at boundaries such as crossroads and bridges, which were seen as places of power and danger. Prayers and songs would be performed at these locations before the procession continued on its way. The object of such rituals was to prevent the spirit from being able to cross back over the boundaries. Aboard ship, it was not possible to have a long funeral procession due to space limitations. Nevertheless, there is evidence that the symbolic idea of the procession was still important to mariners. Almost all accounts refer to the body being carried from its resting place on deck to the lee gangway, where the service itself was conducted. Although this might only have been a distance of a few meters in smaller vessels, it still served to further symbolically separate the deceased from his former shipmates.

On land, the Order of Burial prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer began with the priest meeting the funeral procession at the lych gate, a covered shelter at the entrance to the churchyard. The maritime equivalent of this was for the chaplain,

captain, or other officer who was to perform the service to come out onto the quarterdeck when the procession arrived at the lee gangway. During the service, the placement of people corresponded to the social hierarchy aboard ship. The crew gathered in the waist or on the booms. Officers stood on the quarterdeck, forbidden territory for ordinary sailors unless they had duties there. However, both officers and crew showed respect for the deceased by removing their hats. As in other parts of the burial at sea ritual, the dead sailor's messmates played the part of the family, flanking the body as it lay at the ship's side awaiting burial.

If the ship carried a chaplain, he would conduct the burial service. The chaplain was made an official part of the complement of English naval vessels in the mid-seventeenth century, and United States naval regulations also called for the appointment of chaplains from the time of the creation of the U.S. Navy in 1798 (McKee 1991: 31). However, not all ships in the Royal Navy or U.S. Navy actually had chaplains. It was more common to find them on larger vessels than on smaller ones. Also, most merchant vessels did not carry chaplains. In cases of vessels without formal religious leaders, it was common for the captain to perform any religious services, including funerals. Hall (1895: 296) states that the captain could also appoint another officer to conduct the ceremony if he himself did not wish to.

The service began as on land, usually with the reading of John 11: 25-26, Job 19: 25-27, I Timothy 6: 7 and Job 1:21. This was followed by one or both of Psalms 39 and 90, and a passage from I Corinthians chapter 15. The only difference in the service as performed at sea came during the committal. On land, the committal stated:

> Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed: we therefore commit his body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be like to his glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

The maritime version of the committal was similar, but addressed the fact that the body would rest under the waves instead of being buried in the earth:

> Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed: we therefore commit his body to the Deep, to be turned into corruption, looking for the resurrection of the body, (when the sea shall give up her dead,) and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ; who at his coming shall change our vile body, that it may be like his glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

It is not known when sailors first started to substitute this version for the original passage. The above wording was formalized in the 1662 edition of the *Book of Common Prayer*, the first edition of the Prayer Book to contain a section of prayers specifically for use at sea. It is probable, however, that the phrase "commit his body to the deep" began as a folk process aboard ship prior to its formal adoption by the Church of England.

As the Committal was read, the deceased's messmates tilted the board or grating that held the body and the body slid feet first into the sea. Weighted as it was, the body would quickly sink out of sight. As with any folk event, there were variations on this process. Hall (1895: 297) states that aboard Royal Navy vessels the entire grating was sometimes pushed overboard, having been first tethered to the side of the vessel by a length of rope. The reason for doing this is unclear; Hall states that "there is something

solemn, as well as startling, in the sudden splash, followed by the sound of the grating as it is towed along under the main-chains."

After the body was given to the sea, the remainder of the funeral service continued as on land. At the conclusion, all hands were dismissed, yards straightened, and the vessel continued on its way. As described by Perry (1927: 72), captains could be quick to get underway again, especially when they had a fair wind. Given the sailors' dread of corpses aboard ship and the fear of lingering at a gravesite, it is probable that most sailors shared this sentiment. On land, a meal at the deceased's house following the funeral service typically served as the final act of the ritual. Accounts of burial at sea make no mention of such a meal. This is likely due to the rigid structure of shipboard life. The ship's day was divided into standardized periods (watches), and all meals took place at set times. Apparently a funeral was not considered an occasion worthy of changing the structure of the ship's day. However, most accounts mention that the ceremony occurred in the morning or shortly before noon. Noon represented the end of the morning watch, and it was the time when sailors were traditionally fed dinner, the main meal of the day. Therefore, in the case of funerals conducted in the morning, sailors would be sitting down to a meal shortly after the conclusion of the ceremony simply as a matter of ordinary practice. Like the funeral meal ashore, this would give the men aboard ship time to reflect on the ceremony and the deceased. As such, the meal would serve as another event that helped to remove the dead from his former world and allow the shipmates to continue the process of creating a new social order.

Auctioning the Deceased's Clothing and Possessions

There was one final aspect to the burial at sea ritual. Aboard ship it was customary to hold an auction of a dead sailor's clothing and other possessions. This auction was usually conducted several days after the funeral. Dana (1986: 30) mentions one instance when the auction was held immediately after a sailor's death. In this case, however, the man had been lost overboard and the body was not recovered. In cases where a body was present and was given a burial at sea, the accounts almost always describe the auction as taking place between one and three days after the funeral. As such, the auction served as a final part of the burial at sea ritual by bringing closure to the event of the man's death. The dead man's possessions were a constant reminder of a person who was no longer present. By removing such things from the possession of the dead man and giving them to new owners, it served as a final act of separation between the dead and the living. When the auction was complete, the dead sailor no longer owned anything aboard ship. From that point on, the deceased existed only in memories. Some of these memories were encapsulated in the dead man's former possessions. Owning one of these, then, was one way of helping to keep the deceased's memory alive.

The auction also illustrates another aspect of the maritime worldview. Many accounts state that at these auctions it was customary for sailors to offer more money than items were actually worth (Lloyd 1968: 252). Sailors knew that the proceeds from the auction would be given to the deceased's family at the conclusion of the voyage. By paying extra for the deceased's possessions, they help ease the financial burden on a

family that had most likely lost its main source of income. Thus, the maritime folk group looked out for its members.

The Sea: Boundary or Threshold?

With the conclusion of the burial at sea service and the redistribution of the dead man's possessions, religious requirements for proper treatment of the deceased had been satisfied and the social order was re-created. The dead sailor should now have been in his proper place, enjoying the delights of fiddler's green and sleeping peacefully to await the resurrection. Evidence indicates, however, that mariners were not completely comfortable with the sea as a final resting place.

As a grave, sailors viewed the sea in two completely contradictory ways. On one hand, the sea was seen as the proper resting place for sailors and vessels. Reminiscing about shipmates who had been buried beneath the waves, Sam Noble described the sea as "the natural sepulchre of a sailor" (1925: 222). Richard Henry Dana shared this sentiment. Writing of one former shipmate, Dana (1986: 333) declared, "at least he died as a sailor - he died on board ship." On the other hand, the sea was also seen as an undesirable place for eternal rest. Sailors were well aware of what would happen to bodies buried at sea. Sewing the corpse up in a shroud was one way of mitigating this problem, but sailors knew that such protection would not last long. The wording of the Committal used during the burial at sea service also indicates the unease associated with burial in water. The Committal acknowledges that the body will be "turned into corruption" - violated by the effects of water and marine life - but

also assures mariners that they will be made whole again at the coming of the savior. Nevertheless, sailors remained uneasy.

The sea was thus an undesirable grave, and sailors' lore amply illustrates the unquiet nature of the dead who were buried there. Maritime folklore is filled with stories of ghost sailors and ghost ships who return from the sea (see, for example, Bassett 1971 and Beck 1972). Like ghost stories on land, maritime ones often deal with dead who cannot rest comfortably because they did not receive proper burial. Examples include sailors who were lost overboard or ghost ships that foundered at sea, taking their entire crews to the bottom. While the burial at sea service was intended to put the dead in their proper place so that they could rest easy, maritime lore clearly indicates that even those who received proper burial could return to haunt their former shipmates.

One problem that the sea presented as a gravesite was that it was too vast and porous to be a proper boundary. Richardson (1993) emphasizes how the funeral ritual was designed to turn thresholds into boundaries so that the dead could not return to trouble the living. In her analysis, two thresholds stand out as most important. The first was the coffin lid, which was nailed shut, usually at the deceased's home prior to the funeral procession. Nailing the lid shut turned the coffin into a permanent boundary between the living and the dead. More importantly, the grave itself became the final boundary when it was filled with earth. This was done at the end of the funeral service, and marked the final separation between the deceased's former life and his new home in the realm of the dead. In the minds of the living, the covering of earth

over the coffin represented a comforting barrier that would keep the dead from returning.

During burial at sea, however, neither one of these thresholds could be turned into adequate boundaries. Sewing the body into a shroud did not have the same note of finality possessed by the sound of coffin nails being driven home. This probably accounts for the reason why coffins were preferred for burial at sea when possible. As noted above, however, it was usually only high-status individuals who received this privilege. More importantly, the sea was not a good boundary. Symbolically, the sea is more of a threshold than a boundary. Although the sea divides nations, it also serves as a highway for transport and commerce. No one would have realized this more than mariners, who made their living upon this highway. Moreover, sailors were aware of the sea's tendency to send things back. The edge of the sea forms a threshold where objects pass back and forth between the sea and the land. All manner of flotsam and jetsam, from driftwood to drowned corpses, ends up on the shoreline. Sailors and residents of port communities were well aware of the way that things washed ashore, including corpses and sailors' personal possessions. This would quite likely have helped solidify the image of the sea as an unquiet grave in their minds. It seems likely that the restless nature of the sea resulted in the uneasiness of the maritime mind regarding sea burial. The burial at sea ritual was designed to emphasize the boundaries between the living and the dead, but a watery grave did not possess the comforting solidity offered by earth. Despite the best efforts of mariners to make it a boundary,

the sea remained largely a threshold from which the dead were believed to return frequently.

Memorialization did not end when a sailor was buried at sea. Like the deceased's shipmates, maritime communities mourned the loss of those who were buried beneath the waves. In addition, maritime communities also struggled with the problem of how to cope when men were lost at sea and never received a burial, or were buried in distant lands far from home. As demonstrated in this chapter, the sea was not thought of as an adequate grave. Aboard ship, the burial at sea ritual served as the best way to try to lay the dead to rest properly. On land, maritime communities created their own ways of dealing with this same problem. The creation of memorials to honor those lost beneath the waves or buried in distant corners of the world forms the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII

"WAS NEVER SINCE HEARD OF":

MEMORIALIZING THE ABSENT BODY

In the 1850s, Paul and Louisa Ewer erected an obelisk in New Bedford's Rural Cemetery to commemorate their son Walter (MR# 308; Figure 31). The inscription reads:

SACRED
to the memory of
WALTER C.
Only son of
Paul & Louisa G.
EWER
born Aug. 31 1827
who was lost at sea
from Brig Zoroaster
on her passage to
California
Lat 7° 8' North
Long 114° 24' West
March 18, 1850
Aged 22 yrs 7 mos.
and 18 days

He sleeps beneath the blue lone sea
He lies where pearls lie deep
He was the loved of all: yet none
O'er his low bed may weep.

A separate inscription surrounding the pointing finger symbol at the top emphasizes the fact that Walter's body is not present in the grave: "The sea his body, Heaven his spirit holds." In choosing their son's memorial, the Ewers expressed feelings prevalent both in the maritime folk group and in the wider Anglo-American culture of which it was a part. Both the obelisk shape and the motif of the finger

pointing heavenward, which symbolized the soul's ascent to its joyful home, were

common in mid-nineteenth century cemeteries. On the other hand, the story of

Walter's loss, including details such as the name of the vessel and location where death

occurred, illustrate prevailing maritime attitudes toward memorialization.

Figure 31. Memorial for lost sailor Walter Ewer. MR# 308, New Bedford, MA.

In particular, the emphasis on the absent body highlights a problem that was endemic in maritime society: how to memorialize those who never returned from the sea. Commemorating the missing was not unique to maritime communities. For centuries, soldiers, pilgrims, and other travelers had died and been buried far from home. Nevertheless, with the increase in global seafaring, the problem of memorializing absent loved ones became prevalent to a much larger degree in maritime communities than in shore-based populations. Over 40% of the memorials recorded by the survey commemorate mariners whose bodies are not present at the location of the memorial. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the bodies of most of those who died at sea or in foreign ports would never be brought home for burial. In such cases, the family at least gained some comfort from the knowledge that a burial service had been performed. The bodies of those lost at sea, however, either through falling overboard or by the foundering of vessels, were seldom recovered and never received proper funerals.

The maritime folk group developed ways to memorialize those who never returned. Families added the names of lost mariners to family gravestones and monuments. Sailors honored lost shipmates by erecting cenotaphs to them. Such memorials provided symbolic graves for those lost or buried at sea, in keeping with the prevailing late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century ideal that every person deserved a grave of his or her own to sleep in until the Resurrection. In addition to fulfilling the requirement for a grave, maritime memorials often served as focal points for commemoration, providing family and friends with places to mourn those lost or

buried far away. Nevertheless, despite efforts to create memorials for those whose

bodies were not present, such attempts were never entirely satisfactory. Instead,

epitaphs lament the fact that family and friends will never again see the deceased and

that the person died alone and often had no proper burial service. As discussed for

burial at sea in the preceding chapter, empty graves for absent loved ones proved

ultimately unsatisfying.

Memorials for the Missing: Chronology and Forms

Chronology

The practice of erecting memorials to honor sailors who died far from home

probably began in the mid-eighteenth century. The earliest such memorial recorded by

the survey was the gravestone of Captain John Hyer in Copp's Hill Burying Ground in

Boston (MR# 192; Figure 32):

> In memory of Cap^t. JOHN HYER
> Who Died at Cape Franceway,
> March 8th 1742/3 in y^e
> 46th Year of his Age.
>
> Here lyes ye Body of two of
> the children of Cap^t. JOHN
> & Mrs SARAH HYER
>
> SARAH Died Nov^r 11th 1743
> in ye 13 Year of her Age.
> SAGE Aged 7 Months
> Died Augst 30 1734.

Figure 32. An early memorial for an absent sailor: the gravestone of Captain John Hyer. MR# 192, Copp's Hill, Boston.

Visually, nothing sets the Hyer stone apart from any of the other monuments at Copp's Hill. Death's head and crossbones motifs were common in Boston during the mid-eighteenth century. By memorializing a person whose body was not present in the grave, however, the Hyer stone marks a new phase in attitude toward maritime dead. This shift in attitude is demonstrated by the introductory phrases employed. The phrase "In memory of" for Captain Hyer, contrasted with the use of "Here lyes ye Body" for the two children, emphasizes the fact that the captain's remains are not present in the grave. The three other mid-eighteenth century memorials to absent

seamen (MR#s 17, 196, 298) follow the same pattern as the Hyer gravestone. All commemorate lost mariners, but do so at graves containing the bodies of other family members.

Near the end of the eighteenth century, a significant increase occurred in the number of memorials dedicated to sailors who were lost or buried far away. This increase was first noted on memorials from the 1790s. Although the overall number of memorials recorded from that decade remained small, nearly half were dedicated to missing sailors. From the late-eighteenth century on, a substantial number of memorials to absent sailors were erected in every decade through the end of the nineteenth century. This holds true for both England and the United States, although in England there were fewer such memorials through the first three decades of the nineteenth century. However, this seems to reflect the fact that fewer memorials are preserved in England than in the United States until the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The ratio of empty graves in England is comparable to the ratio of such graves in the United States. It appears, then, that the phenomenon of memorializing sailors who were lost at sea or who died and were buried far away became a common practice in maritime communities in both England and the United States in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Once the practice became a tradition, it continued steadily until the end of the Age of Sail. Moreover, twentieth century memorials recorded by the survey, including a number from the 1980s and 1990s, show that the tradition of memorializing lost sailors continues until the present day.

Family Memorials

The developed tradition of empty graves for sailors took several forms. When the lost sailor was memorialized with an actual grave, it was most common for them to be commemorated on the gravestones of other family members. In such cases, the name of the lost was usually added to an existing gravestone. The Newman family stone at Copp's Hill in Boston (MR# 198) is typical of this form of absent commemoration. The gravestone was originally erected for Captain Robert Newman, who died in 1806. Captain Newman's name, date of death, and age are recorded near the top of the stone, followed by a long epitaph that takes up most of the front side. Added to the very bottom of the stone is a two-line listing for another Captain Robert Newman, who died at sea in 1816. The age at death, as well as the name, suggests that this was the son of the grave's original occupant. In addition, the gravestone records the death of another son, William, who died at Martinique in 1817. In this case, however, there was no more room on the front of the stone, so William's commemoration was added on the back. The dates of death and the use of space on the Newman stone and many similar examples recorded by the survey indicate that adding the names of lost mariners to existing family gravestones was the most common means of honoring absent mariners. In addition, such commemoration was almost always done on the gravestones of immediate family members rather than members of the extended family.

In other cases, it appears that no permanent memorial was erected for the sailor until a family member died and was buried, at which time the sailor's name and details

of death were included on the new gravestone. This practice is shown by stones that

have a person listed first whose body is by all indications present in the grave, but

whose date of death is *later* than that of an absent mariner who is listed after them.

One of the earliest absent commemoration graves recorded by the survey (MR# 196,

Figure 33) illustrates this type:

> Here lyes buried ye Body
> of Mr EDWARD RICHARDS
> died FEBRUARY ye 11th
> 1747/8 Aged 70 Years.
>
> In Memory of
> Mr IOSEPH RICHARDS
> Son to Mr EDWARD &
> Mrs MARY RICHARDS who
> died at PORT MAHONE
> JANUARY ye 18th 1742
> Aged 24 Years.

The distance from Boston, and the death phrase "in memory of" signal that in

this case Joseph's body is not present. Furthermore, the fact that Joseph died six years

before Mr. Richards shows that the family waited to erect a permanent memorial to

their lost son until after the death of his father.

Some memorials of this type feature much shorter lapses in time before the

erection of a permanent memorial than does the Richards gravestone. In several cases

(e.g., MR#s 296 and 119) other family members died within a year of the sailor's loss,

so permanent commemoration took place relatively quickly. On the other hand, several

memorials show that commemoration sometimes did not occur until decades later. On

Figure 33. Richards family gravestone, recording the death of son Joseph at Port Mahon. MR# 196, Copp's Hill, Boston.

Figure 34. Gravestone of a sailor's widow, which also records the loss of her husband four decades earlier. MR# 250, Eastern Cemetery, Portland, ME.

the Bridgeo stone from Marblehead, Massachusetts (MR# 228), Mary Bridgeo, the

widow of George Bridgeo, is listed first. Her death occurred in 1887, and it is likely

that the gravestone was erected shortly thereafter. Listed after Mary is an entry for her

husband George, who had been lost at sea 41 years earlier. A similar stone from

Portland, Maine (MR# 250; Figure 34) was erected following the death of Abigail

Crosby in 1810, but also records her husband Watson Crosby, who was lost at sea in

1775. In cases such as these, either there was a temporary memorial erected previously

to commemorate the lost mariners, or the incident remained a part of family memory

until permanent commemoration following the death of the seamen's widows years

later. Either way, the memory of the lost remained powerful enough for the family to

create a permanent form of commemoration.

In addition to commemoration on the gravestones of family members, a number

of empty graves devoted solely to lost mariners were recorded. The grave of Captain

Amos Sheffield, located in the Old Town Cemetery in Stonington, Connecticut, is the

earliest empty grave recorded by the survey (MR# 281; Figure 35):

This stone is erected
in memory of
Cap^t Amos Sheffield
who died at Demerara
Dec. 25 1799
in the 34 year
of his age.

O every Sympathizing heart drop
with me a Silent tear for he that
went returnes no more.

Figure 35. The earliest empty grave recorded by the survey. MR# 281, Old Town Cemetery, Stonington, CT.

Captain Sheffield's grave is located close to those of several other Sheffields, who no doubt were relatives. Despite having other gravestones at hand to which Captain Sheffield's commemoration could have been added, his family chose to honor him with his own grave. The fact that he died in South America, along with the

epitaph, however, leave no doubt that Captain Sheffield's body is not present in the grave.

Empty graves were more common in the United States than in England. This may be because space was more at a premium in English cemeteries, and the cost of purchasing a grave and gravestone solely for a missing person was too great for most English maritime families. However, there is evidence that some English graves were originally dedicated solely to missing mariners, but later became family plots as other family members died and their bodies were interred at the gravesite. A gravestone in St. James's Cemetery, Liverpool (MR# 113) provides an example of this phenomenon:

In MEMORY of
Captn W^M PROWSE,
who was lost on his Passage from St Domingo
in the year 1823, Aged 25 Years.
Deeply Regretted by his Widow,
And Respected by his Friends.
ALSO OF
W^M Williams, *Shipwright*, died 5th March
1840, Aged 58 Years.
ALSO OF
THOMAS WILLIAMS died January
5th 1848, Aged 45 Years.
ALSO OF
MARY KIRKBY, who died January
19th 1865, Aged 76 Years.
For 50 years a faithful and respected
servant in the family of M^{RS} ATKINSON,
SEAFORTH.
Also of SUSANNAH HAWKINS,
Relict of the above Captn Prowse,
who died April 11th 1870, Aged 73 Years.

The time difference of 17 years between Captain Prowse and the next person listed suggests that the gravestone was originally erected following his death and the

others names were added later. The fact that all five persons commemorated are listed in chronological order according to date of death also suggests that the gravestone was added to over the years. Blank areas on other gravestones in St. James's Cemetery show that gravestones were erected with space for names to be added later. Such examples invariably feature one or two people listed near the top, while the rest of the stone remains blank. Space was left for additional names that were for one reason or another never added. While more common in England, the practice of dedicating a grave for an absent mariner and later interring a family member there was also practiced in the United States. Examples were recorded at Marblehead, Massachusetts (MR# 225), Portland, Maine (MR#s 244, 245), New London, Connecticut (MR# 278), and Newport, Rhode Island (MR# 294).

A few empty graves for multiple lost sailors from the same family were also recorded. One gravestone in Portland, Maine (MR# 249) tells the story of three sons of the Cobb family, all of whom went to sea and never returned (Figure 36). The first, William, died at sea in 1805, his brother Daniel died at St. Bartholomews in 1810, and the third, Smith Woodward, was lost at sea in 1815. Another example from Portland (MR# 243) records the loss of two sons of the Morss family, while a third from Newport, Rhode Island (MR# 297) describes the deaths of a father and son, the former in Africa and the latter in Hawaii.

Along with gravestones, monuments were also commonly used in the nineteenth century to mark family burial plots. As with gravestones, it was common

Figure 36. Three seafaring sons of the Cobb family are commemorated on this gravestone. All three died in separate incidents. MR# 249, Eastern Cemetery, Portland, ME.

for lost sailors to be added to such family monuments. In such cases, the graves of

family members were usually grouped around the monument; sometimes these graves

were marked with individual headstones as well. At the Deane family burial plot in the

Western Cemetery, Portland, Maine, the graves of numerous Deanes are grouped

around a monument that preserves the family record of mortality (MR# 241; Figure

37). Although most of the monument commemorates family members who are buried

close by, one side is devoted to two brothers, one of whom was lost at sea in the 1830s

and the other who died at sea in the 1860s. Many more examples of this type of

commemoration were recorded in the United States, including at Mount Auburn (MR#

206) and Forest Hills (MR#s 208, 210) cemeteries in Boston, New London (MR#s 273,

279), and New Bedford (MR#s 318, 323). Only a single example of this type was

discovered in England, MR# 138 from Liverpool, indicating that the practice may not

have been as widespread there.

Figure 37. Deane family monument. MR# 241, Western Cemetery, Portland, ME.

Figure 38. Denison monument, which records the loss of four seafarers from that family. MR# 287, Evergreen Cemetery, Stonington, CT.

In a similar manner to the empty graves described above, some monuments were dedicated solely to lost sailors. A poignant example of this type is the Denison monument at Evergreen Cemetery in Stonington, Connecticut (MR# 287), which tells the story of four brothers, all of whom died in separate incidents (Figure 38). Each of the monument's four sides tells one brother's story. The first, Ezra, sailed aboard an American privateer during the War of 1812. In December 1812, Ezra went aboard a

captured English vessel as part of a prize crew. The following night, a great gale arose, and the vessel and its crew were never heard from again. Four years later, a similar fate befell Ezra's brother Amos. This seaman was swept from the deck of a schooner and lost at sea. Two other brothers died in distant foreign ports: Charles in Surinam in 1817 and Edward in Batavia in 1818. While not on as large a scale as the Denison monument, similar monuments were erected by other families to record the loss of their seafarers at sea and in foreign lands (MR#s 266, 306, 308, 164, 270).

In addition to gravestones and outdoor monuments, another common form of family memorialization for lost sailors was the dedication of wall plaques inside churches. Many of these survive in excellent condition because they have been protected from the elements. Plaques are common in churches with a strong maritime focus, such as Portsea St. Mary's in Portsmouth, England, St. Mylor near Falmouth, England, and the Seamen's Bethel in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Like gravestones and other outdoor monuments, church plaques were dedicated both to individuals and to multiple lost seafarers.

Collective Memorials

For the purposes of this study, the term collective memorials refers to those that commemorate maritime tragedies with numerous victims who are not usually related to one another. They were usually erected by communities or individuals who were not related to those lost. Collective memorials often take the form of monuments to particular large-scale maritime disasters. The earliest one recorded by the survey is the

gravestone at Portsea St. Mary's, Portsmouth, dedicated to the loss of HMS *Royal*

George near Portsmouth in 1782 (MR# 171). This gravestone originally marked the

final resting place of 35 victims of the tragedy who were buried in a mass grave in St.

Mary's churchyard (Brewer and White no date: 8-9). The stone was later moved from

the gravesite to prevent deterioration due to weathering, and is now located inside the

church. Although in this case the bodies of some victims were buried in the grave, the

gravestone also commemorated the hundreds of others whose bodies were never

recovered:

<div align="center">

A testimony of
sympathy
for the unfortunates
who perished by the sinking
at Spithead of the
HMS Royal George
August 29th 1782
erected by one who
was a stranger both to officers
and the ship's company

</div>

The same holds true for other collective memorials recorded during the survey.

A tablet on an outside wall of All Saints Church in Wyke Regis (MR# 28; Figure 39)

records the fateful story of the *Alexander*, which wrecked near Portland in a storm in

1815. The story of the *Alexander* is particularly tragic because the ship was returning

from a voyage to India, and had made it to within a day's sail of its destination port of

London when a storm forced the vessel ashore, killing everyone aboard except for five

men. As with the case of the *Royal George*, some bodies were recovered and buried at

All Saints, and the plaque lists others that were recovered and buried at various other

points along the bay. Many bodies, however, were lost forever. The monument makes

a point of listing the names of all of those recovered from the wreck and their places of burial. On the other side of the ocean, the residents of New London, Connecticut, erected an obelisk for the steamer *Atlantic*, which wrecked near that port in 1846 (MR# 261). Like the *Alexander* memorial, the creators of the *Atlantic* monument felt it important to record the names of those who were recovered and buried in their cemetery. The monument also makes it clear, however, that many others who died were never found.

Figure 39. Monument commemorating the loss of the *Alexander*. MR# 28, All Saints, Wyke Regis, Dorset.

Sailors Commemorating Lost Comrades

Around the mid-nineteenth century, it became common for ship's crews to erect monuments to lost comrades upon returning from voyages. Some of these monuments were erected at prominent locations in port cities, such as the ones dedicated by Royal Navy crews that line the seawall in Portsmouth, England. In a similar fashion to the family memorials described above, sailors also erected monuments in churchyards and cemeteries, and placed wall plaques in churches. Whether outside or indoors, the form of all of these types of memorials is similar. They record the name of the vessel, the names of those who died, the circumstances of death, and dates of death. Royal Navy crews were also in the habit of including the name of the overseas station to which the vessel was assigned and the dates of the cruise's duration. In addition to these common details, additional information such as the sailor's age at time of death and position aboard ship were often included. Some feature epitaphs as well.

Typically, the dead were listed in rank order, reflecting the shipboard hierarchy that formed a fundamental part of maritime life. However, such monuments do not discriminate on the basis of socioeconomic class or ethnicity: all those who died were included. The obelisk dedicated by the crew of one British warship in the Royal Navy cemetery in Portsmouth, for example, notes the loss of Kroomen during that vessel's tour on the Cape of Good Hope and West Coast of Africa station between 1878 and 1882 (MR# 4; Figure 40). Kroomen were freed slaves who were employed by the Royal Navy in hot climates such as Africa. A similar example from the United States

Figure 40. MR# 4, Royal Navy Cemetery, Portsmouth, Hampshire.
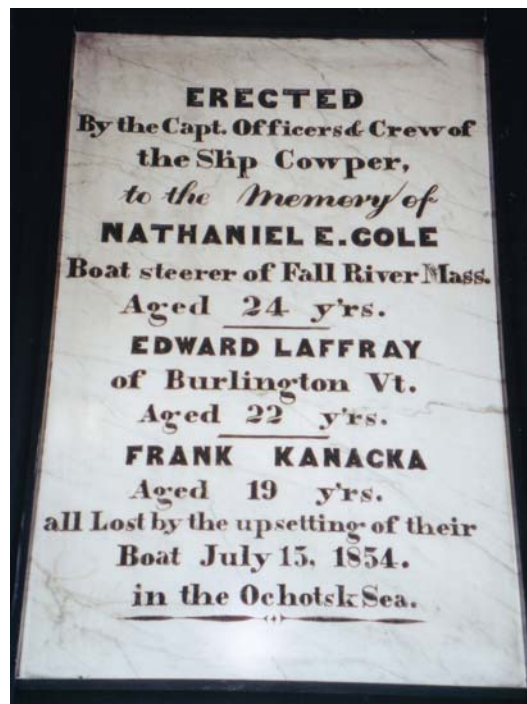
Figure 41. Monument to three sailors, including a native Pacific islander. MR# 406, New Bedford Seamen's Bethel.

comes from the Seamen's Bethel in New Bedford (MR# 406; Figure 41). This plaque is dedicated to three men who were drowned by the capsizing of their boat while pursuing whales in the Ochotsk Sea in 1854. Two of the men have Anglo-American names, but the third, listed as "Frank Kanacka," was a native Hawaiian islander. Pacific islanders were often employed on whaling vessels (the classic example is Queequeg from *Moby Dick*), and were known as "Kanackas" by Americans. While in some sense a racial epithet, the crew nevertheless felt it was important to record the death of their shipmate upon their return to New Bedford, even though the man commemorated had probably signed aboard in the Pacific, had most likely never been to Massachusetts, and likely had no family or connections there. Likewise, the Royal Navy sailors described above felt it was necessary to include the Kroomen, who probably had no ties to England. This indicates a feeling of group loyalty among members of the maritime folk group.

With the growth of seamen's societies in the nineteenth century, these groups also began erecting monuments to honor lost members. A good example of this type is the obelisk erected in 1848 by the Marblehead Charitable Seamen's Society "in memory of its deceased members on shore and at sea" (MR# 229). Prominently situated with a view of the harbor and open Atlantic beyond, the four sides of the obelisk provide details about the fate of Marblehead seamen (Figure 42). One face is dedicated to those lost in the great gale of September 1846, another lists members lost at sea in other incidents, and a third records the names of those who died on shore.

Figure 42. MR# 229, Old Burial Hill, Marblehead, MA.

The Meaning of Memorials for Absent Bodies

The Growth of Individualism

The creation of memorials in maritime communities to honor those who never returned formed part of a broader shift in attitudes toward the dead that took place in both England and the United States during the eighteenth century. At that time, there was a growing perception that each individual was important. The Romantic

movement, which began in the mid-eighteenth century, stressed the importance of individuals and also emphasized emotional love and the importance of the body. These principles became prevalent in Anglo-American culture, including memorialization practices. In memorialization, the increase in individualism was expressed as a greater emotional attachment among family members, along with the desire to have a continuing relationship with loved ones after their deaths.

Many scholars (e.g., Ariès 1974; Gittings 1984; Parker Pearson 2000) have noted the growth of individualism in memorialization practices in the eighteenth century. While the idea of increasing individualism is widely accepted among many scholars today, others remain cautious. Houlbrooke (1998: 2-3, 380-381) maintains that interpreting evidence for individualism in eighteenth-century funerary practices is problematic for two reasons. First, the term has numerous meanings and is used in different ways by different scholars. Second, the evidence for individualism is open to more than one interpretation. While Houlbrooke's caution is warranted, it should not preclude examination of the question of individualism. All evidence is open to varying interpretations, depending on the theoretical paradigm and subjectivities of the interpreter.

Houlbrooke questions whether there was truly an increase in individualism in the eighteenth century. He disagrees with Stone's (1977) interpretation of the increasing importance of the family during that time. According to Houlbrooke, Stone's interpretation is based on eighteenth-century wills that show that a greater proportion of wealth was distributed to the family than in previous centuries.

Houlbrooke's study of Medieval wills, however, supports a different interpretation.

Prior to the Reformation, willmakers distributed their wealth in two ways. First,

money was left to the family, just as it would be in later centuries. Medieval wills,

however, also provided money to the church to pay for prayers and funeral masses for

the deceased's soul. After the Reformation, Protestant doctrine, which held that the

fate of the soul was determined at death, outlawed such provisions. Since it was no

longer necessary to leave money for the provision of one's soul, willmakers after the

Reformation began leaving this money to their families. Rather than showing an

increase in sentiment towards the family during the eighteenth century, such money

was, according to Houlbrooke, simply a product of the Protestant Reformation.

Houlbrooke also points out that grief at the loss of a loved one did not begin in the

eighteenth century, but was present in earlier times as well.

Nevertheless, Houlbrooke (1999: 197) does acknowledge that there was an

increasing respect for the memory of the deceased and an increase in care of the

physical body beginning in the late seventeenth century. This increasing concern was

manifested in two ways. First, coffins came into widespread use in the second half of

the seventeenth century. Prior to that time, most bodies were buried in shrouds, which

soon resulted in deterioration of the corpse. Coffins offered better protection to the

body, allowing it to remain intact longer. The increase in the erection of monuments,

which began in the eighteenth century, also shows increasing concern with the

individual. It is these shifts that form the crux of the argument for an increase in the

importance of individuals in the eighteenth century. Houlbrooke is correct that the

family was important, and people felt grief at the death of loved ones, before that time. During the eighteenth century, however, people started caring more about the deceased's memory and also manifested an increasing concern with the actual physical remains of the deceased. This shift in attitude is well-attested in studies of English and American mortuary practices.

For the British Isles, Tarlow (1998, 1999: 112-132) provides the best archaeological interpretation of the increase in individualism in the late-eighteenth century. In her study of memorialization trends in Orkney, Tarlow noted a large increase in the number of gravestones in the late eighteenth century, which she refers to as the "gravestone boom." A similar trend exists throughout the British Isles, although the increase in the number of gravestones occurred at different times in different locations (Parker Pearson 2000: 48). Tarlow links the great increase in memorials to the idea of "affective individualism" put forth by Stone (1977). Affective individualism, in keeping with the principles of Romanticism, stressed emotion and love towards one's family to a greater extent than previously. In earlier centuries, most people in England did not receive a permanent grave, nor were most graves permanently marked (Horrox 1999: 104-105; Tarlow 1999: 124). As churchyards filled up, bodies would be moved to charnel houses to make room for new interments. In the late-eighteenth century, however, Romantic notions made the practice of moving bodies unacceptable. Prevailing ideas held that every person deserved a grave of their own that should remain undisturbed for all time. In memorialization, the Romantic spirit is shown by emotional wording such as "beloved," and also by an increase in the

number of husbands and wives who were buried in the same grave. In addition, the provision of permanent graves made it possible for people to have a continuing relationship with loved ones after their deaths. People could go to churchyards or cemeteries to visit the actual spot where their loved was buried. This became a common practice in England in the nineteenth century, and evidence shows that similar ideas held sway in America as well.

In New England, memorialization practices also manifest an increasing concern with commemorating both the memory and the body during the eighteenth century. Stannard (1977: 108-117) states that New England Puritans originally buried their dead with little or no ceremony, in accordance with their prevailing belief in the simplicity of burials. The earliest Puritan burials in New England were either not marked at all or were marked only with simple fieldstones. These would typically be inscribed only with the initials and date of death. Also, as in England, the earliest New England graves do not appear to have been designed to last in perpetuity, as very few graves from the earliest period of English settlement remain. By the late seventeenth century, however, Puritan attitudes toward memorialization were changing. Funerals became more elaborate, and the Puritans began marking their graves with permanent headstones. Throughout the eighteenth century, the changing designs on New England Puritan gravestones reveal much about the increase in concern for both the deceased's memory and his or her actual physical body.

In their classic studies of changing symbolism in New England cemeteries, Deetz and Dethlefsen interpreted the adoption of the cherub motif in the mid-

eighteenth century as an emblem of immortality (Dethlefsen and Deetz 1966; Deetz 1977). In contrast to the earlier death's heads, which had symbolized mortality, cherubs demonstrate a shift in emphasis to the soul's flight to heaven after death. Deetz (1977: 71-72) also noted a change in the introductory phrases associated with cherub stones. Whereas earlier inscriptions usually began with "here lies," the inscriptions on stones featuring cherubs typically began "here lies buried the body." To Deetz, such explicit mention of the physical body emphasized the separation of corpse and soul that occurred after death. What was once one person had now become two parts, the body lying in the ground and the soul winging its way to heaven. While Deetz's interpretation seems valid, the mention of the body in the introductory phrase also indicates the growing concern with the disposition of the physical body in mid-eighteenth century America.

By the 1780s, the urn and willow motif replaced the cherub as the dominant symbol on New England gravestones. According to Deetz (1977: 71-72; Dethlefsen and Deetz 1966: 507), the urn and willow emphasizes the memory of the deceased rather than the actual physical remains. Introductory phrases such as "sacred to the memory of" illustrate the same concern. However, concern with the fate of the body was still manifested in late-eighteenth century gravestones, as shown by the continued use of introductory phrases mentioning the body that are found on many urn and willow stones. In addition, the gravestones of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries tend to stress individual accomplishments. These changes occurred in the United States at the same time as the increase in individualism in the British Isles. On

both sides of the Atlantic, the trend indicates the beginning of the belief that each

individual should have his or her own marked grave that should remain undisturbed for

all time.

Just as noted by Tarlow for Britain, the increase in individual graves in New

England would have facilitated their use as focal points for visitation. This signals a

shift in the relationship with the dead. This trend continued in the second quarter of the

nineteenth century with the birth of the Rural Cemetery Movement. The first such

cemetery was Boston's Mount Auburn, which opened in 1831. Rural cemeteries were

intended to be far more than simple places to bury the dead. They were landscaped

like parks, and were intended to provide both peaceful places for the deceased to sleep

as well as enjoyable settings for the living to visit. Haas (1998: 71) argues that the new

rural cemeteries "transformed burial markers in America from reminders of the fact of

death to remembrances of the past." In reality, this transformation had already

occurred in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, as shown by the

individual graves of that period marked with urn and willow symbols. Instead of

transforming American attitudes toward death, the rural cemeteries reflected the

Romantic notions prevalent when they were created. As noted by Linden-Ward (1992:

295), rural cemeteries "echoed cultural trends and tastes shared by many Americans,"

which included Romantic ideals such as the serenity of nature and providing a space to

visit deceased loved ones. What Haas saw in the rural cemeteries is a developed form

of remembrance incorporating Romantic ideals, not the origins of such ideals. The

work of scholars such as Dethlefsen and Deetz (1966; Deetz 1977) makes it clear that

the need to commemorate the memory of individuals and a concern for the fate of the

physical body were already in place by the late eighteenth century. This shift in

attitudes toward death in the United States corresponds to, and takes a form broadly

similar to, the shifts in attitudes toward death noted in the British Isles. In both places,

by the end of the eighteenth century prevailing sentiment regarded each person as

worthy of remembrance, and also held the view that each person's body deserved to be

buried in a grave that would remain undisturbed until the Resurrection. The great

increase in maritime memorials dedicated to absent mariners occurred at the same time

as the increase in concern for individualism in Britain and America. It is in the light of

this new attitude toward death that the maritime memorials commemorating missing

sailors must be understood.

The Problem of the Absent Body

The need to have a body to bury is a fundamental aspect of the Anglo-

American outlook on death. As discussed above, the concern with the fate of the body

seems to have been a product of the rise of individualism in the eighteenth century. By

the end of that century, the idea that each person deserved a proper grave that should

remain undisturbed for all time was in place in both England and the United States. As

part of this concern with physical remains, Anglo-Americans manifest a great desire to

recover the bodies of those killed in accidents or war. Anglo-American maritime

folklore contains numerous folk practices designed to find drowned bodies so that they

may be recovered (Bassett 1971: 472-473). It was thought, for example, that a loaf of

bread filled with quicksilver and set adrift would float to the location of a drowned body. Other means of locating a drowning victim included firing cannon over the water, which was thought to cause the body to float to the surface.

Unfortunately, despite such folk practices, maritime communities lost many members whose bodies were never recovered from the sea, or who died and were buried far from home, as shown by the large numbers of such graves recorded during the survey. In keeping with the ideas of individual commemoration that became a part of the larger culture of Anglo-American death practices in the eighteenth century, however, members of maritime communities felt the need to memorialize those whose bodies were absent. The solution to this problem was to erect memorials even in cases where the body of the person being memorialized was not available for burial.

Like the graves discussed by Tarlow (1998, 1999) and Deetz (Dethlefsen and Deetz 1966; Deetz 1977), maritime memorials for absent bodies provided a focus for a continuing relationship with the dead. This is shown most clearly by the gravestones that record the names of absent mariners. As discussed above, it was most common to add the name of the missing to the gravestone of other family members or to a family monument. Including the name of the absent mariner made that gravestone or monument a focus for visiting not only those buried at the site, but also the missing person as well. It is as if the inclusion of the name of the missing symbolically linked the gravesite to the place where the mariner's body actually rested, which in the case of those lost or buried at sea was completely unknown. An excellent example of this idea comes from those memorials that include the latitude and longitude where the sailor

was lost or buried. Providing such information on the memorial forges a symbolic link between the location of the memorial and the place where the deceased's body lies. Having a piece of ground dedicated to the missing, which could be visited, no doubt helped the family deal with the fact that their loved one's body was gone forever.

This idea is shown most clearly by those gravestones and monuments dedicated solely to absent mariners. Each one of these is a cenotaph, marking a piece of ground for a person whose body will never physically occupy the space. Despite the fact that the body will never be recovered and buried in the grave, maritime families felt it necessary for their loved ones to have a space of their own. In part, this reflects prevailing attitudes regarding personal space for graves. It also speaks, however, to the power of memory, and the pain that must have been felt by those families who never received a body to bury.

While families tended to memorialize their lost mariners with graves or monuments at the family plot, the memorials erected by shipmates to honor absent comrades indicate a similar but slightly different concern. Such monuments tend to perpetuate the memory of the person rather than providing a space for visitation. They also stress duty to king and country, rather than emotional love, as shown by the common use of words such as "esteem" and "respect." In addition, the location of these memorials indicates more of a communal rather than a familial form of memorialization. For example, wall plaques in churches provide a focus for communal remembrance. This is particularly true of maritime churches such as St. Mylor, Cornwall, and the New Bedford Seamen's Bethel. Churches such as these were

popular places for mariners and their families to gather. Sailors returning from or preparing to embark on voyages might visit the church to offer thanks for a safe homecoming or ask for a safe return. When their men were at sea, maritime wives visited churches to pray for their husbands' safety. Seeing the plaques dedicated to the lost would remind both sailors and maritime families how fragile the seamen's lease on life really was. They would also perpetuate the memory of lost members of the community, and provide a place for other members to grieve with them.

The outdoor monuments erected by mariners also illustrate the communal nature of such memorials. They tend to be prominently situated where they can be viewed by all members of the community. The Royal Navy obelisks along the seawall in Portsmouth, for example, still attract the attention of viewers today. Even those in cemeteries, such as the monuments in the Royal Navy Cemetery at Haslar (MR#s 4, 9) and Kingston Road Cemetery, Portsmouth (MR#s 175, 179) tend to be located close to the intersections of major walkways, so that those strolling through the cemeteries would have seen them easily. They invite both community members and outsiders to participate in the process of remembering those who will never return.

The Importance of Place

Naming the place of death on memorials evokes a response in other members of the maritime folk group. Seeing "died at Demerara," for example, would have meant something to other members of the maritime community. They would not have needed the place to be explained to them. Mariners might have been there, and seeing the

name would have evoked their own memories of experiences there. Even if they had not been to the place, other sailors would likely have known shipmates or other acquaintances who had, and therefore would have heard tales about it. Family members and other non-seafaring members of maritime communities would likewise have heard tales of distant locales. Viewing the name on a gravestone would evoke memories and provoke an emotional response. They might think of stories of the oppressive heat and deadly yellow fever of Jamaica or Demerara, the harsh conditions of the slave markets of Calabar, or the vast loneliness of the Indian Ocean surrounding Desolation Island.

The shared understanding of places served as a way in which memorials united members of the maritime folk group. The chief audience for such memorials was other members of the maritime folk group. The shared base of knowledge possessed by members of maritime communities served as a reference point for interpreting the emotions being expressed in maritime memorials. Upon seeing a memorial, a member of the group would, both consciously and subconsciously, draw upon his or her understanding of maritime life to interpret the feelings expressed in the memorial. Because of their knowledge of maritime life, other members of the maritime community would understand the feelings being expressed in maritime memorials to a greater extent than non-members. For this reason, maritime memorials functioned to set members of maritime communities apart from outsiders. Understanding the information contained in the memorials served as a sign of group affiliation.

Therefore, the places listed on the memorials both drew upon shared group traditions and helped to perpetuate them.

Relationship to Other Studies

The idea of the importance of memorials for absent mariners outlined above goes against some prevailing scholarship in Anglo-American death studies. Barley (1990) maintains that the cenotaph has never been a major part of English death practices. He contends that the creation of monuments to honor the missing began in England after the First World War. Haas (1998: 53-58) also links the beginning of memorializing the missing to World War I memorials. It appears, however, that both Barley and Haas developed this idea because they chose only large, elaborate state- or community-sponsored memorials as their focus of study. While it may be true that state sponsorship of memorials to commemorate missing men began following the First World War, a study of maritime memorials clearly indicates that the practice began as early as the middle of the eighteenth century, and became a common feature of maritime memorialization by the turn of the nineteenth century.

In addition, Haas and others have argued that the phenomenon of memorializing the missing by recording their names on monuments also came into use on the memorials erected after World War I. As with memorials for absent bodies, however, this practice did not begin with state-sponsored monuments honoring World War I dead. Memorials erected by mariners and maritime societies, such as those by Royal Navy ship crews in England or the Marblehead cenotaph (MR# 229) feature the

same form as the later World War I memorials. The missing are listed by name, in

hierarchical order according to shipboard position. As mentioned previously, the

mistake made by those who would see the World War I memorials as the earliest

example of this practice is that they only studied elaborate state- or community-

sponsored monuments. The practice stands out on World War I monuments because

the scale of devastation was such that the monuments include many more names than

the earlier maritime memorials. Those for the First World War, however, did not

initiate the practice; instead, they followed a pattern that had already been established

by the middle of the nineteenth century. This is not to say that those who created the

World War I memorials used maritime memorials as their source of inspiration. The

same phenomenon could have been present on contemporary memorials of other folk

groups. Soldiers, for instance, would be the obvious group to examine, as their

memorials might have included the same phenomena seen on maritime memorials.

Nevertheless, it is beyond doubt that folk practices such as those seen on maritime

memorials predated state-sponsored memorials, rather than the other way around. This

example should serve as a warning to those scholars who would see memorial practices

as being handed down to the folk from the elite.

The Hollowness of the Empty Grave

Despite the efforts of seamen and maritime families to honor absent sailors,

such memorials do not seem to have been completely satisfying. As stated by Melville

(1977: 37) in *Moby Dick*, "Oh! ye whose dead lie buried beneath the green grass; who

standing among flowers can say - here, *here* lies my beloved; ye know not the desolation that broods in bosoms like these." In these lines, Melville both highlights the importance of memorializing absent mariners and shows that the empty grave or marble cenotaph could never quite take the place of the real body.

That Melville was expressing a popular sentiment in maritime communities is borne out by memorials. Perhaps nowhere is the longing for a body expressed more poignantly than on a gravestone from St. Budeaux churchyard in Plymouth, England (MR# 56). The gravestone commemorates a Royal Navy sailor, Samuel Henry Jeffery, who died at Malta in 1862. It includes the epitaph: "Could I but see the spot/ The place where he is laid/ And drop a tear upon that spot/ It would ease me of my pain." The epitaph clearly and mournfully expresses the grief at not being able to visit the place where Jeffery is laid to rest. Similar expressions are recorded on memorials that commemorate sailors lost or buried at sea. The Cobb memorial (MR# 249) mentioned above, which commemorates three seafaring brothers who died in three separate locations, contains the epitaph:

> Far distant from their native land
> They perished in the yawning deep
> Without a friend to stretch the hand
> And none their early fate to weep

Numerous epitaphs provide a glimpse of the anguish felt for those whose bodies rest in the sea. For example, in Portland, Maine, the grave of Mary Stonehouse records just such a lament (MR# 252). The inscription states that Stonehouse drowned after falling from the *Portland* packet in 1807. Her body was recovered and buried,

and the epitaph inscribed on her tombstone both celebrates this fact and laments all

those who never returned from the sea:

> From the cold bosom of the wave,
> Where others found a wat'ry grave,
> This lifeless corpse was borne! And here,
> The friends of virtue drop the tear
> That mourn the much lamented dead,
> But ah! What bitter tears are shed,
> For fathers, mothers, babes, who sleep
> In the dark mansions of the deep!
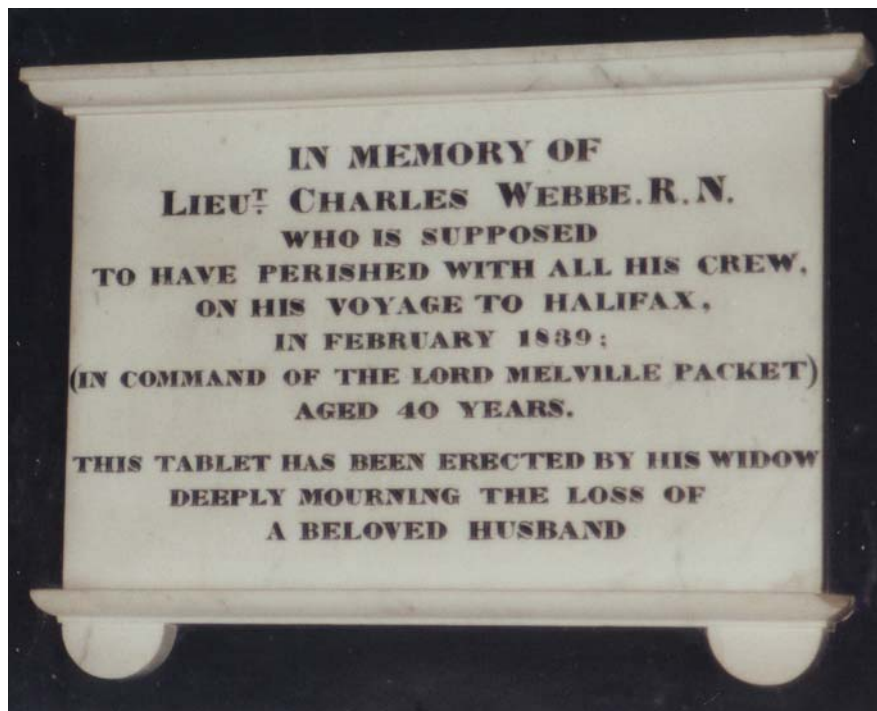

Figure 43. Marble plaque for Lt. Charles Webbe, which hints at his widow's grief over his loss. MR# 69, St. Mylor, Falmouth, Cornwall.

The absence of a body provided no final closure for loved ones. Although in

their minds they knew that their mariner was gone forever, it was a hard idea to accept

when they had no physical body to mourn. Several memorials record the ambiguous

feelings engendered by the missing body. After he was lost at sea in 1839, the widow of Lieutenant Charles Webbe, RN, erected a marble table to his memory in St. Mylor church (MR# 69; Figure 43). The use of the phrase "supposed to have perished" seems to give a glimpse of Mrs. Webbe's feelings. Despite what reason tells her, she seems to hold out a fragment of hope that her husband is not dead, and that someday his vessel may come sailing back into Falmouth harbor. Others show similar feelings. A pair of memorials on either side of the Atlantic express the pain felt by those who never received word of their loved one's fate. The earlier of the two (MR# 298) is located in Newport's Common Burying Ground and is dedicated to Captain John Dennis,

> who sailed from this place
> Aug. 22 1756
> in the 42d year of his age
> was never fince heard of, doubtlefs
> made his exit in the watery element

The grave of Wilfred Gilberry in Liverpool (MR# 132), mentioned in chapter 1, contains similar wording:

> left Callao 30th May 1865, in command of
> the ship "Andacallo" bound for Valparaiso
> and has never since been heard of.

"Has never since been heard of" is not a statement of finality. Rather, it provides a little hope that someday their loved one will be found, if not still sailing at sea then perhaps discovered by visitors to some remote island. Such memorials make it clear that the ambiguous nature of being lost at sea must have been heartwrenching to the families involved. After a time, they erected memorials to their loved ones, knowing inside that they were almost certainly dead, yet holding out some hope that

they might yet be found alive. Thus, these memorials could never quite fulfill the need for closure.

Summary

Those whose loved ones were buried or lost at sea or interred in foreign graveyards longed to see the place of burial, and created memorials to absent sailors in an attempt to symbolically link the memorial spot with the location of their loved one's body. Like burials at sea, memorials for absent mariners proved ultimately unsatisfying in the end.   While they provided a symbolic link to the missing and a focus for commemoration, empty graves could never take the place of physical remains. Just as the sea provided no permanent barrier preventing the return of the dead, the ambiguous nature of being lost or buried far from home prevented maritime families from completely accepting the loss and moving on with their lives.

CHAPTER IX

THE ANCHOR AND THE CROSS

Seamen in the Age of Sail were notorious for their wild, sinful ways and dislike
of religion. Yet in the mid-nineteenth century, the survey recorded a marked increase
in the number of maritime memorials with religious themes. Before that time, only a
few maritime memorials that expressed religious sentiment were noted. Beginning in
the 1840s, the frequency of memorials with religious themes increased, until by the
1870s over half of all maritime memorials recorded featured some form of religious
sentiment (Figure 44). The percentage remained substantial (25% or more) until the
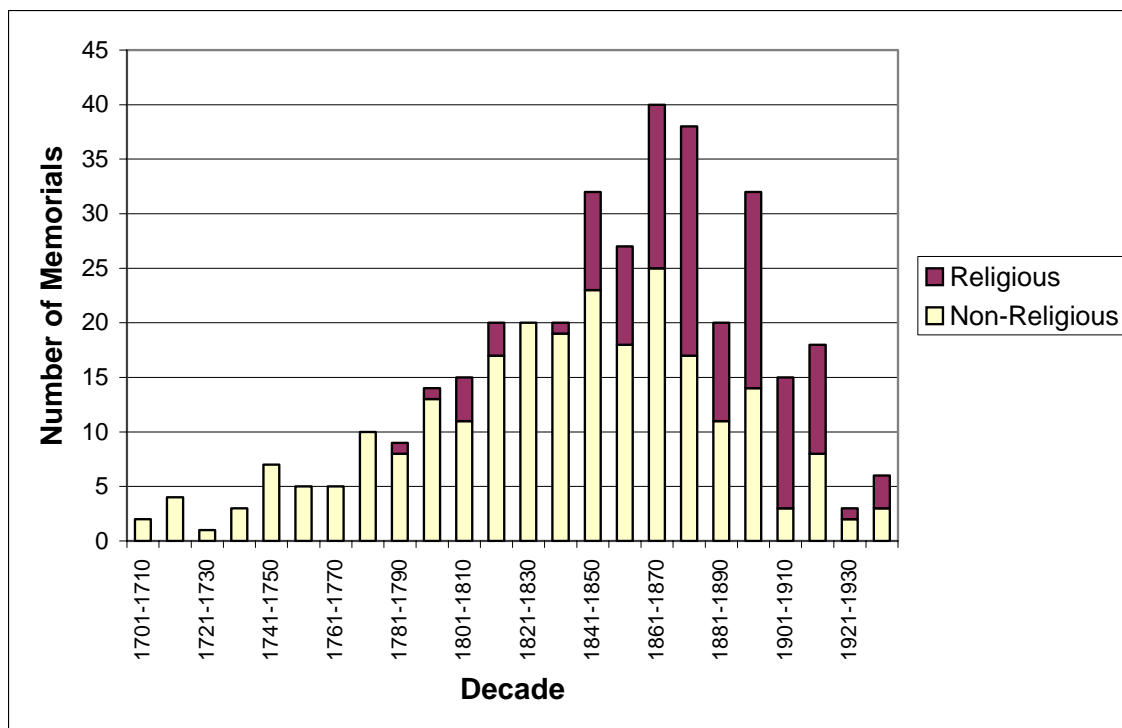end of the period under study.

Figure 44. Comparison of religious sentiment in maritime memorials, by decade.

Sailors and Religion

Both their contemporaries in the Age of Sail and modern scholars agree that

sailors in the Age of Sail were not religious. Landsmen tended to view sailors as wild

heathens, a view that was given weight by the way sailors often acted when on shore.

By the early eighteenth century, religious leaders such as Boston's Cotton Mather

exhorted ship captains to do more to make religion a part of shipboard life:

> It is a matter of the saddest complaint and wonder, That there should be no
> more Serious Piety, in the Seafaring Tribe....Old Ambrose called the Sea, The
> School of Vertue. It afflicts all vertuous Men, that the Mariners of our Dayes
> do no more make it so....The Company aboard with you is Your Family.
> Family-Worship is Expected from all that would not forfeit the Name of
> Christianity. For such a Society to Live without any Social Acknowledgment
> of a God would be a Practical Atheism...(Mather 1709, quoted in Kverndal
> 1986: 612)

Attempts were made to introduce religion into shipboard life, and modern

historians are divided over the success of these endeavors. During the Commonwealth

period in England, for example, Puritans attempted to make the navy more religious.

The 1652 edition of the Articles of War, which governed conduct aboard English naval

vessels, ordered that captains have services performed regularly aboard English

warships. This was the first time that such an order had been issued (Capp 1989: 307).

As discussed in chapter 7, the 1662 edition of the Book of Common Prayer was the

first edition to contain specific instructions for the burial of the dead at sea and forms

of prayer to be used aboard ship. Despite these measures, however, there is little

evidence that religious fervor took hold in the mid-seventeenth century English navy.

While a number of officers were religious and made an attempt to inculcate these views

among their crews, such measures met with little success and most sailors remained irreligious (Capp 1989: 307; Davies 1991: 116).

Rediker (1987) provides the best recent analysis of the role of religion aboard ship. Rediker argues that, while most sailors were not religious, a number of religious sailors did exist and were generally tolerated aboard ship as long as they did not try to impose their views upon their shipmates. Even those who were avowedly religious, however, also relied on superstition and ritual. According to Rediker (1987: 186), "the uncontrollable vicissitudes of nature, the extreme vulnerability of seamen, and the frequency of death at sea gave a special power to superstition, omens, personal rituals, and belief in luck." Religious and irreligious mariners alike followed a belief system that included "Christian and pre-Christian beliefs, referents, and orientations" and that drew upon material from the Bible, classical mythology, and personal experience narratives that seamen swapped among one another (Rediker 1987: 184).

The tendency to resort to superstition and magic when faced by dangerous or uncontrollable situations has been noted by anthropologists for decades. In his classic ethnography *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1984; originally published 1922), Malinowski noted that Trobriand Islanders practiced different rituals depending on whether they were fishing in lagoons or on the open sea. In lagoons, where there was little danger to the fishermen themselves and where the supply of fish was plentiful, fishermen rarely resorted to ritual. The sea, on the other hand, presented a more dangerous and difficult environment for Trobriand fishermen. The open sea was dangerous, and the location of fish was unpredictable. Therefore, Trobriand fishermen

venturing onto the open sea resorted to magic designed to protect themselves against nature and rituals to aid in finding fish. The dangerous and unpredictable nature of the sea necessitated such rituals.

Mullen (1978) noted a similar phenomenon among Texas Gulf Coast commercial fishermen. Mullen's study dealt with two groups: bay fishermen, who worked the shallow bays and estuaries along the Texas coast, and deep sea fishermen, who ventured far into the Gulf of Mexico in search of their catch. Mullen found that the bay fishermen, who worked for the most part in safe, protected waters, had few magic rituals or superstitions designed to protect themselves against the forces of nature. Deep sea fishermen, by contrast, practiced many forms of ritual magic. Like the Trobriand islanders, the Texas deep sea fishermen felt the need for extra protection against the dangers of the sea.

Rediker (1987: 173-175) notes three main reasons why religious sentiment was not strong at sea. First, distance from land-based social institutions, such as the church, caused sailors to lose touch with religion. A second factor was the nature of the maritime work experience. When a sailor entered the shipboard community, he underwent an initiation process to become a member of the group. This process involved putting aside previous beliefs and adopting group values. Since irreligion was a prevailing value among mariners, most newcomers became irreligious as well. Finally, Rediker notes that the working class, from which most common sailors came, had a tradition of skepticism. By the eighteenth century, religious sentiment had

declined among working class people. Thus, many sailors came from a background

that was already cynical toward the clergy.

Contemporary accounts support Rediker's view that distance from land-based

social institutions contributed to irreligion among sailors. The Reverend Edward

Mangin, who served briefly in the Royal Navy in 1812, described the difficulties faced

by a chaplain aboard a naval vessel. Admiralty regulations specified certain official

duties for chaplains, but Mangin (1951: 8-9) complained that these amounted to an

attempt "to do some things which are improper, and some which are impossible."

Chaplains were supposed to assist with handling quarrels between sailors, and see that

just punishment was meted out. According to Mangin, however, any attempt to do so

would draw the wrath of the captain and officers, who saw this as infringement upon

their responsibilities. A similar problem occurred when dealing with the sick.

Regulations stated that chaplains should visit the sick, but naval surgeons frowned

upon this, as they were afraid that the presence of the chaplain in the sick bay would

cause ill sailors to give up hope and succumb. Also, chaplains were supposed to help

teach midshipman mathematics. In Mangin's view, this was a task best left to sea

officers who understood navigation, rather than clergy who did not. Finally, the

chaplain performed no necessary task in the day-to-day operation of the ship, and in

fact had to work hard to avoid getting in the way. Attempts to bring religious

devotions into the operation of a vessel could result in a backlash. In Mangin's words

(1951: 9):

> As for the Chaplain's constant efforts to rebuke the seamen, etc. for profane
> swearing, and intemperate language of every kind, the injunction sounds

plausible: but when the after-guard is called, and the people are lazy in turning up; or at the coming on of a gale, when the order is given to strike top-gallant masts, and this is clumsily done; the Chaplain had better spare both his lungs and his ears and retreat, as fast as he can, to his own deck, or to the ward-room.

Examples such as this make it easy to see why Mangin concluded "nothing can possibly be more unsuitably or more awkwardly situated than a clergyman in a ship of war" and left the Royal Navy after serving only three months and fourteen days (Thursfield 1951: 1).

The Bethel Movement

Despite sailors' lack of interest in religion, beginning in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries efforts were made to spread the gospel among mariners. Langley (1967) and Kverndal (1986) provide two of the best overviews of the development of religious reform movements aimed at sailors. Langley (1967) demonstrates that such efforts were part of a larger process of societal reform that began near the end of the eighteenth century. In the United States, the period from approximately 1790 to 1840 was termed the Second Great Awakening. During this time, the United States experienced a marked increase in religious sentiment coupled with a desire for social reform (Hatch 1989; McLoughlin 1978). The Enlightenment philosophy of the eighteenth century emphasized a concern for downtrodden members of society. In the nineteenth century, Protestant reformers combined this philosophy with the idea that "every man was his brother's keeper" (Langley 1967: 44). Protestant reformers began to help the poor, slaves, the mentally handicapped, and other

disadvantaged people. It was not long before religious reformers turned to sailors, whom they considered to be greatly in need of reform.

Kverndal (1986) provides an exhaustive account of the development of seamen's missions. The earliest effort to bring religion to sailors consisted of the distribution of Bibles and religious tracts. These media reached a much wider audience than missionaries were able to do in person. Many sailors considered it unlucky to have a religious leader aboard ship, so it was difficult for ministers to go to sea. Written materials, however, met with no such objection from sailors. In fact, religious writings provided sailors with something to read, or have read to them, during tedious sea voyages. According to Kverndal, the distribution of religious literature to sailors first began to bear fruit in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars. During this time, British sailors who read the tracts spread the holy word throughout the Royal Navy and to other parts of the world. Also, the wars allowed English missionaries to preach to captured foreign seamen. With the coming of peace, these sailors spread religion among the merchant and naval fleets of their nations.

With the distribution of religious literature well underway by the early nineteenth century, efforts to minister directly to sailors soon followed. The first mariner's church opened in London in 1818. Appropriately, it was located in the former Royal Navy warship *Speedy*. Other maritime churches were soon established, but efforts to preach to sailors initially met with poor results. This was largely because sermons attacked seamen for drinking, gambling, profanity, and other vices. Sailors, always an independent, stubborn group, did not respond well to attacks on the few

pleasures that they enjoyed. The missionaries learned, therefore, that they would have to be positive rather than negative if they wanted to convert mariners. To this end, missionaries began providing services that sailors needed. Seamen's friend societies, for example, helped sailors find employment and assisted them with legal matters. Sailors' homes provided mariners with affordable, comfortable housing during time in port, while sailors' rests gave elderly seamen a place to live after retirement. All of these institutions brought sailors to the church, where missionaries could then work to convert them. Thus, missions to convert seamen in the nineteenth century utilized the same pattern that missionaries often employ among third-world cultures today. Missionaries use services, such as food and health care, as "bait" to attract people whom they then attempt to convert.

At times, the practices of reformers caused friction with sailors who understood what the reformers were up to. Langley quotes Nathaniel Ames, who served in both the U.S. Navy and the merchant marine. Ames believed that his fellow seamen understood the true motives of the reformers: "why will not these self-constituted reformers of morals reflect, if only for one moment, that if sailors are 'babes in grace' they are by no means babes in common sense? [Sailors] are by no means so easily gulled as the fabricators of this pious magazine may think" (Langley 1967: 57).

This quotation from Ames illustrates the main problem with both Langley's and Kverndal's studies. Both seem to believe that reform movements enjoyed broad support among sailors, but neither really analyzes how deeply the Bethel movement truly penetrated seafaring culture. Langley, for example, provides numerous quotes

describing the happiness of seamen who served aboard "blue light" vessels where alcohol, flogging, and harsh language were forbidden. However, most of these quotes come from publications such as *The Sailor's Magazine and Naval Journal* or the writings of naval chaplains such as Charles S. Stewart. Such sources were undoubtedly biased in favor of the reformers. Langley does not devote enough time to examining the biases of these sources.

Maritime Memorials and Religion

As discussed above, the maritime belief system paradoxically included both an aversion to religion as well as the incorporation of some religious elements. Contemporary sources from the Age of Sail show that most sailors were not religious, but most firsthand accounts do mention sailors who did have faith. While most scholars today hold the view that religion did not play a major role in seafaring life, others such as Langley and Kverndal argue that Bethel movements did reform a number of mariners in the nineteenth century.

Study of maritime memorials can contribute to this debate. Memorials recorded by the survey show expressions of religious sentiment beginning in the late-eighteenth century. Although few in number at first, a boom in religious expression occurred in the mid-nineteenth century. The following sections describe the forms that this phenomenon took, discuss the role played by various maritime groups in expressing religious sentiment, and illustrate some of the functions that religion played in maritime memorialization.

Early Religious Expression in Maritime Memorials

Before the late-eighteenth century, the symbolism on maritime memorials reflected the symbolism of society as a whole. Death's heads were common on maritime gravestones from the first half of the eighteenth century, while the urn and willow motif became more common in the second half of that century. This is in keeping with the changes in symbolism noted by other scholars for both England (Tarlow 1999) and America (Deetz 1977; Dethlefsen and Deetz 1966). Likewise, the inscriptions of maritime memorials did not feature much religious sentiment until the late-eighteenth century.

Maritime memorials with religious epitaphs begin to appear in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, but only a few maritime memorials with religious sentiment were recorded from that time. The earliest religious maritime memorial recorded by the survey is the gravestone of John Cox, from the Eastern Cemetery in Portland, Maine (MR# 248), which dates to 1785. Like most gravestones of the period, Cox's stone features an urn and willow design. The connection of religious sentiment and maritime views, however, is expressed in the epitaph. Cox, who died at only twenty years of age, was commemorated by his parents with the epitaph:

> Boreas winds & various Seas
> Have tofs'd me to & fro,
> In Spite of both, by God's decree,
> I harbour here below:
> Where I do now at Anchor ride
> With many of my fleet,
> Yet once again I shall Set Sail
> My Admiral Christ to meet

The same epitaph is present on the gravestone of Captain Robert Newman in Copp's Hill, Boston, who died in 1806 (MR# 198). The idea of being anchored safely awaiting the resurrection was also recorded on an early religious gravestone from Old Burial Hill in Marblehead (MR# 226). The gravestone of Frances Doliber, who died in 1806 at age 47, includes the epitaph:

> Storms & tempests now are over,
> Foes no more disturb my breast,
> In the realms of peace & glory,
> Anchor'd safe my soul to rest.

The gravestone of Henry Roby in Boston's Copp's Hill burial ground represents another example of the way that religious sentiment and maritime metaphors were intertwined to express faith in resurrection in early-nineteenth-century America. Roby, who died in 1807, was memorialized with the epitaph:

> Supported by that hope which as an anchor
> to the soul, is sure and steadfast, he desired to
> depart, and to be with the Lord Jesus Christ.

This epitaph is an adaptation of Hebrews 6: 19, which asserts the belief that those who believe in Christ will have eternal life: "we have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain." The connection of Christ with the anchor was a theme in Christianity from earliest times. Early Christians used the symbol of the anchor as a secret sign of belief in the days of persecution. As will be seen below, the anchor served as the cornerstone of the boom in religious sentiment that occurred in maritime memorials in the mid-nineteenth century. These examples from late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century America foreshadow later developments. At the turn of the nineteenth century, however, the

connection of the anchor, Christ, and mariners was only expressed on a few maritime memorials.

By the same token, other forms of maritime religious sentiment were expressed in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, but they were few and far between. Captain Addison Richardson of Salem composed his own epitaph, which both reflects his experiences of a lifetime at sea (Addison died at age 72) and expresses his faith in another life to follow (MR# 220, Broad Street Cemetery, 1811):

> Having weathered life's wintry storm & its fevr'd
> pestilential summers, the victor death by one
> mighty effort, has at length dislodged the ten-
> ant, & the frame is crumbling into dust, food for
> worms. But he maintained a firm belief that the
> great Architect will one day restore the fabric
> anew with imperishable materials; & put the
> tenant in full possession never more to be separa-
> ted; beyond the reach of sin & sorrow; beyond
> the jurisdiction of DEATH: which finally shall
> be vanquished & swallowed up in victory.
> God shall be all in all.

A similar theme was echoed on the tombstone of Addison's contemporary Captain Edward Russell, across town in Salem's Old Burying Point (MR# 215, 1815):

> Now safe arrives the heavenly mariner:
> The battering storm the hurricane of life
> All die away in one eternal calm.
> With joy divine full glowing in his breast,
> He gains the port of everlasting rest.

Like the equation of Christ with the anchor, the idea of heaven as a safe port after the storms of life became a major theme in maritime memorials in the mid-nineteenth century. In the 1810s, however, when Addison and Russell were laid to rest, such sentiments were rare on maritime gravestones.

Rare as it was in America, the religious sentiment on these early American maritime memorials stands in sharp contrast to contemporary English ones. John Powell's gravestone in Holy Trinity, Hull (MR# 147), which was discussed at the beginning of chapter 6 (see page 150), serves as a good example of the lack of religious sentiment on late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century English maritime gravestones. The idea of resting at anchor is the same maritime metaphor expressed in the American stones, but unlike the American memorials there is no explicit connection with religion.

Only three late-eighteenth through early-nineteenth century maritime memorials with religious sentiment were recorded in England. Even on these, religious sentiment does not seem to form as much of a centerpiece as it did on the American memorials. The memorial plaque for Edward Yescombe in Mylor Church, Cornwall (MR# 74), offers a good example:

Sacred
to the Memory of
EDWARD BAYNTUM YESCOMBE Esq.
late Commander of
the King George Lisbon Packet,
who was alike distinguished for
His Manners as a Gentleman
His Conduct as an Officer
and
His Benevolence as a Christian
A Man of strict Integrity
worthy of Imitation
in his public Capacity
and in his domestic Life
honored and beloved
He lost his Life
in bravely defending his ship
against the Enemy

He died August the 12th 1803 Aged 38

Yescombe's widow, who erected the tablet, chose to emphasize his worldly

qualities and brave defense of his vessel, while devoting only one line to "his

benevolence as a Christian." Similarly, the widow of Royal Navy Captain Sir Thomas

Byard expressed her belief "in the firm hope of a blessed resurrection" on the marble

plaque devoted to her husband, who died at sea in 1798 (MR# 62, St. Budeaux,

Plymouth). Only one line was devoted to Mrs. Byard's hope for life eternal, while the

majority of the plaque describes her husband's qualities as a sailor and captain:

> To perpetuate the Memory of Sir Tho.s Byard Kt.
> late of Mount Tamer, in this Parifh.
> Who to the Service of his King and Country
> devoted the greateft Part of his Life,
> This Marble is erected by the Grateful Affection
> of his furviving Family
> It is not for them to record thofe Actions
> which gained their beloved Friend fo much Honour
> They are chronicled in the naval Annals of his Time
> and engraven in the Hearts of all thofe
> who had the good Fortune to ferve under
> his aufpicious Command

The last passage, which begins "it is not for them to record," represents a stock

epitaph in circulation at the time. Almost the same wording was employed on the

memorial plaque for Admiral Marriott Arbuthnot in All Saints Church, Wyke Regis

(MR# 22). The memorials for Yescombe and Byard clearly show that service, duty,

and honor were considered more fitting sentiments to express on the tablets of naval

officers. The only other English maritime memorial from the early-nineteenth century

that expresses religious sentiment follows a similar pattern. The tablet erected by the

owners of the ship *Alexander*, which wrecked near Portland in 1815 (MR# 28),

includes:

> May angels guide your
> [   ] the blest regions of eternal day
> Where no rude blasts provoke the billowy roar
> Where virtues kindred meet to part no more.

Even here, however, most of the tablet is devoted to the circumstances of the

vessel's loss and the names of those whose bodies were recovered. It appears, then,

that religious sentiment was simply not as strong in late-eighteenth and early-

nineteenth century English maritime memorials as in American ones. Even in

America, however, religious sentiment was the exception rather than the rule during

that period.

The Mid-Nineteenth Century Boom in Religious Sentiment

A sharp increase in the number of maritime memorials with religious sentiment

occurred in the mid-nineteenth century in both England and the United States. This

phenomenon took several forms. First and foremost was the use of the anchor as a

symbol for Christ. The anchor became the single most dominant symbol on maritime

memorials in the mid-nineteenth century. By the same token, the connection of the

anchor with Jesus Christ became the most common form of expressing religious

sentiment on maritime memorials at the same time. As described above, four late-

eighteenth and early-nineteenth century American maritime memorials contained

epitaphs expressing the symbolic association of Christ with an anchor. In the

nineteenth century, however, carved anchor symbols came into use on gravestones in

both England and America. The anchor quickly became the dominant symbol on maritime gravestones, and remained so until the twentieth century.
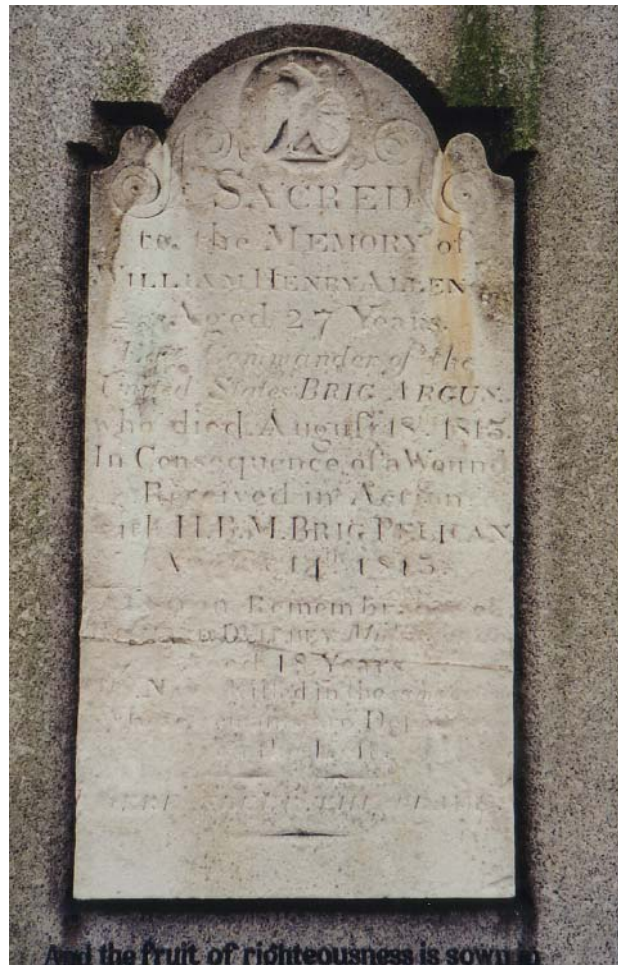
Figure 45. Gravestone of William Henry Allen, an American naval officer killed during the War of 1812. MR# 63, St. Andrew's, Plymouth.

The earliest anchor representations, however, symbolized maritime occupation and identity rather than religious sentiment. The earliest representation of an anchor recorded by the survey was the gravestone of William Henry Allen at St. Andrews Church, Plymouth (MR# 63). Allen, captain of the US Navy brig *Argus*, died of

wounds received in battle with HMS *Pelican* in August 1813, and was buried in

Plymouth. The top of Allen's gravestone is carved in the form of an eagle holding a

shield emblazoned with an anchor motif (Figures 45 and 46). Judging by its position

on the shield held by an American eagle, this probably symbolizes Allen's role as a US

Naval officer.

Figure 46. Detail of MR# 63, showing American eagle holding a shield emblazoned
with an anchor.

Many anchor symbols, like that for William Henry Allen, function merely as

indicators of maritime identity. Others were polysemous (Barthes 1964), serving both

to signify maritime identity and to express religious sentiment. The juxtaposition of

anchors with religious symbols and biblical quotes makes the interpretation of the

anchor as a religious motif undeniable. The identification of Christ as an anchor,

which comes from the biblical verse Hebrews 6:19, had already made an appearance in

the late 1700s and early 1800s, as discussed above. This symbolism reappeared during

the religious boom of the mid-nineteenth century. The earliest memorial connecting

the anchor symbol to the idea of Christ as an anchor is the monument of Gilman Low

from Forest Hills Cemetery in Boston (MR# 207, Figure 47). On the sepulchre, a

carved anchor rests above the inscription:

GILMAN S. LOW
BORN MAR 13 1810
DIED AUG 16 1863

CHRIST OUR HOPE
WHICH HOPE WE HAVE AS AN
ANCHOR OF THE SOUL BOTH SURE
AND STEADFAST

Numerous variations on the theme of Christ as an anchor were recorded by the

survey. Anchors appear with crosses (Figure 48), angels (Figure 49), and other

Christian motifs (Figure 50).

Although anchors represent the most prominent symbol of the mid-nineteenth

century maritime religious boom, other forms of religious expression were also

recorded. Christian symbols such as the cross, "IHS" ("In Hoc Signo") symbol, and the

finger pointing heavenward also occur on maritime memorials. In addition, religious

phrases and epitaphs occur frequently on maritime gravestones from the mid-

nineteenth century on. Religious inscriptions take the form of Bible verses, lines from

Figure 47. Detail of monument for Gilman Low, showing anchor and verse (Hebrews 6: 19). MR# 207, Forest Hills Cemetery, Boston.

Figure 48. Anchor with chain wrapped around cross. MR# 163, Highland Road Cemetery, Portsmouth, Hampshire.

Figure 49. Angel holding anchor on monument for sailors from HMS *Severn*. MR# 168, Portsea St. Mary's, Portsmouth, Hampshire.

Figure 50. Anchor incorporated into "IHS" (*in hoc signo*) Christian symbol. MR# 93, Falmouth, Cornwall.

hymns, and stanzas from poetry. From 1840 to 1940, 46.3% (107 out of 231) of the

maritime memorials recorded by the survey feature some form of religious sentiment.

The common theme linking all of them is the connection between religious sentiment

and maritime lifeways.

Explaining the Increase in Religious Sentiment

If sailors were irreligious, how do we explain the clear increase in maritime

memorials with religious themes that began in the mid-nineteenth century and

continued until the end of the Age of Sail? Analysis shows that most maritime

memorials with religious themes were not erected by sailors (Table 5). Rather,

religious sentiment was expressed most often by other members of the maritime folk

group, primarily wives, parents, and siblings of sailors.

Table 5. Number of religious maritime memorials erected by different groups.

Erected By	Number
Sailors	20
Non-Sailors	
Wives	26
Parents	17
Other Family	29
Community/Friends	2
Military	1
Unknown	12
Total:	107

Despite the fact that the clear majority of religious maritime memorials express

the sentiment of seafarers' wives and families, nearly one-fifth were created by sailors

themselves. It is likely that most of these represent the impact of the Bethel movement

on seafaring culture. Two pieces of evidence support this interpretation. First, the increase in religious sentiment among mariners began in the 1840s, several decades after the birth of the Bethel movement. It is possible that religious sentiment penetrated seafaring slowly, so that its impact was not seen in the memorials until several decades after the Bethel movement began. Second, many of the memorials that include religious sentiments of sailors came from places of worship. For example, six of the twenty were recorded in the Seamen's Bethel in New Bedford (MR#s 390, 394, 395, 398, 399, and 407). Three others came from inside the church of Portsea St. Mary's in Portsmouth (MR#s 168, 169, and 170). All of these were erected by ship's companies to commemorate lost shipmates. It is important to note, however, that even in these places of worship, sailors erected memorials to lost comrades that did not contain any religious imagery or inscriptions. Their only connection with religious sentiment is the fact that they were placed in churches. Thus, although the memorials show that sailors participated in the mid-nineteenth century religious boom, they may not have felt religious sentiment to the same degree as other members of maritime communities.

Functions of Religion in Maritime Memorials

Sailors and other members of seafaring communities turned to religion as a source of comfort against hardship and loss. Religious imagery and inscriptions expressed the belief that God would take care of loved ones who were lost at sea, died at sea, or buried on the far side of the world. Religion also provided hope that sailors

would anchor safely in the port of heaven following their final voyage. Finally, maritime wives and families used religious sentiment to express the faith that they would meet their lost seamen again following the Resurrection.

Strength in the Face of Tragedy

A number of memorials express faith that God will take care of sailors who succumbed to the dangers of the sea. The obelisk erected for Walter C. Ewer, discussed at the beginning of the previous chapter (see pages 204-205 and Figure 31 page 205), provides a good example. A finger pointing heavenward adorns the top of the obelisk, showing where Walter's spirit has gone. Around this, the phrase "the sea his body, heaven his spirit holds" emphasizes the same idea.

Numerous other examples of the same theme exist among the memorials recorded by the survey. In Evergreen Cemetery in Stonington, Connecticut, the headstone of Captain William Beck, who died at sea in 1846 (MR# 286), includes the epitaph, "If Life's wide Ocean smile or roar, Still guide them to the Heavenly shore." The gravestone of James Stephenson in Sculcoates Lane Cemetery, Hull, describes his loss in the sinking of the fishing smack *Olive Branch* in February 1889 (MR# 140). The gravestone includes a depiction of the smack with a broken mast, symbolizing the life cut short (Figures 51 and 52). In addition, the epitaph "come unto Me, all ye that are weary, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28) expresses the hope of Stephenson's parents that their son made it safely to heaven. The verse "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" was also used to express the hope of salvation for those

Figure 51. Gravestone of James Stephenson, who lost his life by the foundering of the fishing smack *Olive Branch*. MR# 140, Sculcoates Lane Cemetery, Hull, East Yorkshire.

Figure 52. Detail of MR# 140, showing fishing boat with broken mast.

lost at sea. It appears on the gravestone of Captain Charles Vail in Cedar Grove

Cemetery, New London, Connecticut (MR# 275). Vail was lost at sea in 1874. The

same verse was recorded twice in England. It appears on the gravestone of William

Edward Bolitho in St. Budeaux churchyard, Plymouth (MR# 54). Bolitho drowned in

Malta harbor in 1864 and was buried in a churchyard on the island, never returning to

his family in Devon. Similarly, the family of James Smallridge Jeffrey chose the verse

to commemorate their son, who died in a shipwreck on the coast of Northumberland in

1857 (MR# 48, Plympton St. Maurice, Devon). Whether or not any of these men were

religious is unknown, but their families hoped that the Lord would provide for them.

Figure 53. Stained glass window commemorating Captain John Downey, RN, who
died when the packet *Briseis* foundered in 1838. MR# 75, St. Mylor, Cornwall.

Even more poignant is the stained glass window in Mylor church, Cornwall, dedicated by the widow of John Downey, commander of the packet *Briseis*, which was lost in the North Atlantic in 1838 (MR# 75; Figures 53 and 54). The description of Captain Downey's loss is written at the bottom of a panel showing the biblical story of Christ and his disciples in a boat on the Sea of Galilee (Luke 14: 22-33). In the story, Jesus walked across the water to his disciples, who were in a boat upon the sea. At first the disciples feared they were seeing a ghost, but soon were reassured that it was indeed their savior. Jesus then called to Peter to walk across the water to him. Peter did so, but became frightened by the wind and waves and began to sink. Peter called

Figure 54. Detail of the lower left panel of MR# 75, showing Christ and the disciples on the Sea of Galilee.

out for help, and Jesus reached out to him and saved him, saying, "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?" The story teaches that one must have faith in order to be saved. The juxtaposition of the story of Downey's loss with this particular scene seems to express the widow's faith that Jesus also reached out to her husband in his hour of need. The panel to the right of this scene shows the story of the flood, with Noah's ark floating placidly on the waters. In the foreground, the arms of a drowning person reach beseechingly from the depths (Figure 55). The inclusion of this scene may indicate that Downey's widow understood the horror of drowning at sea that her husband experienced in the last moments of his life in this world. Unlike the unbelievers who were drowned and lost forever, however, she had faith that Christ would rescue her husband's soul from the waters.

Figure 55. Detail of lower center panel of MR# 75, showing the story of Noah's ark. A drowning person's arms reach beseechingly from the waves.

In Holy Trinity Church, Hull, a stained glass window commissioned by another maritime wife expresses a similar theme. Sarah Leetham dedicated the stained glass window to her husband, a shipowner and master, two sons who were sailors, and a third son who died as a young child. The window consists of four panels, each of which depicts a scene from the Bible. From left to right, the window shows the story of the flood (Genesis 6-9), Moses being rescued from the Nile (Exodus 2: 3-9), Jesus and his disciples on the sea of Galilee (Luke 14: 21-33), and God bringing sailors safely into port (Psalm 107). Inscriptions under each panel tell the stories of the deaths of her four loved ones. The far left, accompanied by the scene of the flood, describes the death of her husband at Nervi, Italy, in 1875. To the right of this is the story of her son John, who was "accidentally drowned at Ipsamboul, on the Nile," in 1879. This inscription accompanies the story of Moses being rescued from the Nile, which includes the verse "I drew him out of the waters." This scene symbolizes Sarah Leetham's faith that her son, like Moses, was indeed "saved" from the Nile. Like John Downey's widow discussed above, Mrs. Leetham envisioned her loved one's soul being taken up to heaven rather than perishing in the water. The next panel to the right, which shows Jesus saving his disciples on the Sea of Galilee, is accompanied by the description of the death of Walter Leetham at Kensington in 1880. Although nothing in the description indicates that Walter's death was related to the sea, the use of the image of Christ rescuing those upon the waters indicates that Mrs. Leetham considered the maritime imagery appropriate for commemorating her son. Finally, the last panel depicts a scene of mariners safely entering port, and includes the verse "so He bringeth

them unto the desired haven" (Psalm 107: 30). This scene is above the description of William Henry Leetham, who died in 1850 at only three years of age. Obviously, William was too young to have been a sailor. In this case, the imagery of anchoring safely in the haven probably stands for all four Leetham men, expressing Mrs. Leetham's belief that all her men found a safe harbor for eternal rest. As will be discussed below, the image of anchoring safe in God's harbor at the end of life's voyage was another common theme in the religious maritime memorials of the nineteenth century.

As with those lost at sea, religion could provide a comfort to the families of sailors who died and were buried in foreign lands. Such a theme appears on a memorial brass in Bristol Cathedral that was erected by the widow of Captain John Sanderson, RN (MR# 105):

TO THE MEMORY OF
MY BELOVED HUSBAND
JOHN SANDERSON,
A CAPTAIN IN THE ROYAL NAVY,
WHO DIED WHILE ON ACTIVE
SERVICE, IN COMMAND OF
HER MAJESTY'S SHIP "ARCHER"
OFF THE CONGO RIVER, SOUTH-
AFRICA, JUNE 27TH 1859, AND
WAS BURIED AT LOANGO.

"BLESSED ARE THE
PURE IN HEART, FOR
THEY SHALL SEE GOD."

"WHAT I DO, THOU KNOW-
EST NOT NOW, BUT
THOU SHALT KNOW
HEREAFTER"

The first part of the inscription asserts the widow's conviction that Sanderson was doing his duty when death overtook him. As discussed in chapter 6, attention to duty was a fundamental value of maritime life. Performing one's duty was an essential part of ensuring the safe operation of a vessel, so it is easy to see why Mrs. Sanderson would think it important to note this point. The rest of the inscription, however, makes it clear that the knowledge that her husband was performing his duty served as little comfort to her. In addition to expressing her faith that her husband will be with God, the final stanza of the epitaph speaks of Mrs. Sanderson's struggle to accept the fact that her husband would never return. The final stanza represents an attempt to cope with the fact that her husband will never return by viewing his death as divine will, that cannot be known to her now, but which will be understood in the fullness of time.

Faith also served as a comfort for the sudden death that was a fundamental part of life in maritime communities. Sculcoates Lane Cemetery in Hull contains a gravestone for seaman Robert Smith, who "died suddenly" in 1872 at age 27 (MR# 144). The epitaph "Life how short! Eternity how long" emphasizes the brevity of a sailor's life. The stone includes a carving of a cross, anchor, and heart, symbolizing the Holy Trinity of faith, hope, and love (Figure 56). This symbolism expresses the Smith family's belief that even though their son was taken suddenly his soul was saved. The gravestone of Thomas Atwill in St. Budeaux churchyard, Devon (MR# 57), discussed in chapter 6, represents another whose life was suddenly cut short by an accident. The epitaph shows his widow's belief that "in heaven we hope to meet again." The phrase

Figure 56. Detail of gravestone of Robert Smith, showing the holy trinity of faith (cross), hope (anchor), and love (heart). MR# 144, Sculcoates Lane Cemetery, Hull, East Yorkshire.

"In the midst of life we are in death" which forms part of the Anglican burial service, likewise expresses the fact that death can come suddenly at any time. It was recorded on two memorials in England. The first, a gravestone in Portland St. George, Dorset, was erected by their siblings to honor three seafaring brothers who met untimely ends (MR# 35, Figure 5 page 126). The first two brothers, Captain Thomas Elliott Read and John Read, perished in the sinking of the steamship *Theban* in January 1870. Less than a year later, a third brother, Joseph Read, died in the wreck of the steamship *Cambria*. While the gravestone also commemorates the mother and a sister, both of whom are probably present in the grave, the placement of the epitaph "in the midst of life we are in death" refers specifically to the three lost sailors. Thus, it was probably chosen by

the Read family to illustrate the pain suffered by the sudden tragic deaths of their brothers. Far to the northeast in Hull, another seafaring family chose the same verse to express their pain at the sudden death of seaman Richard Garrick, who was lost at sea in 1889 at age 17 (MR# 142).

Hope at the End of Life's Voyage

In a profession where so many did not return, the ending of a mariner's life peacefully at home at a full age was a subject for rejoicing. A number of memorials recorded by the survey express thanks to God for deliverance from the dangers of the sea and joy that the sailor is now safely anchored. As discussed above, this theme was present in some of the earliest maritime memorials with religious themes in America (MR#s 198, 248, 226, 215, 220). As part of the mid-nineteenth century religious boom, the theme reappeared in both Great Britain and the United States. For example, the gravestone of John Moore, RN, who died in 1872 at age 77, contains the epitaph, "He hath delivered me from the stormy wind and tempest" (MR# 83, St. Mylor, Cornwall). In nearby Falmouth, maritime wife Sophia Maunder chose a similar epitaph for her husband Henry upon his death in 1905: "The tempest may sweep o'er the wild stormy deep, he is safe where the storm comes no more" (MR# 91). Both of these gravestones illustrate the relief and thanks shown by maritime families whose loved ones had made it through the perils that took so many other sailors from their communities.

A number of other maritime memorials also contained variations of the phrase "safe in port." Not all of these necessarily denote religious sentiment. For example, two English gravestones, for mariners Richard Lee (MR# 50) and Josiah Heath (MR# 177), contain the simple epitaph "safely anchored." Heath's, in fact, is carved on an anchor representation, demonstrating that the anchor does not stand only for maritime identity, but also as a metaphor for the conclusion of life's voyage. Similarly, the gravestone of seaman William Hopper in Portland St. George includes the epitaph, "Safe home in port" (MR# 37). From the same churchyard, the gravestone of another English mariner, Robert Wallace, contains the same epitaph (MR# 40), along with a carved anchor symbol. A similar epitaph, "safe in port," was recorded on the gravestone of Captain Alvan Fengar in New London, Connecticut (MR# 268), while the gravestone of another American mariner, Captain Daniel Humphrey in New Bedford's Rural Cemetery (MR# 321), included the similar phrase "safe in harbor." Although all of these examples express the idea of being safely anchored at the end of life's voyage, none is explicitly religious.

Variations on the same theme, however, contain wording that shows that the safe harbor is indeed heaven. In the church of Portsea St. Mary's, the memorial brass for Basil Hall (whose description of a burial at sea was cited in chapter 7) and his son, both captains in the Royal Navy, serves as a good example of the use of the haven as a metaphor for heaven (MR# 166):

To the Glory of GOD
and in loving memory of
BASIL HALL, Captain Royal Navy,
Born 31st December 1788.

Laid to rest in the ground near this Church in September 1844.
Also in loving memory of
BASIL SIDMOUTH DaROS HALL, Captain Royal Navy,
Son of the above, Born 8th August 1833,
Died at Mayrair in Germany 11th July 1871.

"Then are they glad because they are at rest;
and so He bringeth them unto the
haven where they would be."

The epitaph, which is from Psalm 107, confirms that in this case the haven is heaven. In addition, the first line of the memorial also expresses religious sentiment. It is likely that the gravestone of John France from Sculcoates Cemetery in Hull (MR# 141), which contains the epitaph "safe in the haven" is meant to express the same religious idea as the Hall memorial brass. In France's case, the inclusion of an anchor reinforces the idea of being safely at rest in harbor.

The image of heaven as a safe harbor at the end of life's stormy voyages was not unique to maritime communities. It formed part of the general religious sentiment of the mid-nineteenth century, and appears in several hymns from the period. Two memorials, one each in England and the United States, include an epitaph consisting of one line from a maritime hymn. The gravestone of English sailor John Bower in Portland St. George commemorates him with the epitaph "Rocks and storms I'll fear no more" (MR# 42). Bower's gravestone also includes an "IHS" motif, further indication of religious sentiment. In Cedar Grove Cemetery, New London, Connecticut, Captain John Ewen's epitaph provides a more complete version than Bower's:

Rocks and storms I'll fear no more
While on that eternal shore
Drop the anchor furl the sail
I am safe within the vail.

The stanza is the chorus from the hymn "Safe Within the Vail," the full version

of which runs as follows (Fillmore Brothers 1882: 298):

"Land ahead!" Its fruits are waving
O'er the hills of fadeless green;
And the living waters laying
Shores where heavenly forms are seen

Chorus
Rocks and storms I'll fear no more,
When on that eternal shore:
Drop the anchor; furl the sail:
I am safe within the vail

Onward bark: the cape I'm rounding:
See the blessed wave their hands;
Hear the harps of God resounding
From the bright immortal bands.

Now we're safe from all temptation,
All the storms of life are past:
Praise the Rock of our salvation:
We are safe at home at last.

It is easy to see why this hymn struck a chord with mariners. After a difficult

and dangerous life on the sea, "hills of fadeless green" where one could rest with "all

the storms of life" over must have held great appeal to wearied mariners.

Faith in Resurrection

Closely connected to the idea of being safely anchored at the end of life's

voyage was the expression of faith in resurrection at the end of the world. This theme

was used both for mariners who passed away peacefully at the end of their lives as well

as for sailors lost at sea. The gravestone of Charles Davidson, Master Mariner of Hull,

who died in 1873 at age 68 and was buried in that city, includes an anchor design and the epitaph "my flesh shall also rest in hope" (MR# 145). Both the anchor and the epitaph express the hope of another life ahead. The gravestone of John Scriven in Portland St. George makes the connection of the anchor and hope even more explicit (MR# 32). Scriven's stone includes an anchor at the top surrounded by the phrase "in

Figure 57. Anchor and phrase "In sure and certain hope" on the gravestone of seaman John Scriven. MR# 32, Portland St. George, Dorset.

sure and certain hope" (Figure 57). Scriven, who died in 1902 at the ripe age of 86, was also commemorated with the epitaph "for he giveth his beloved sleep." Taken together, the elements on Scriven's stone symbolize the mariner sleeping peacefully awaiting the resurrection. Susanna Gilbert, maritime wife in Cornwall, also expressed

the faith that her husband would rise again at the end of time. The epitaph she chose

for her husband, Richard, upon his death in 1910 at age 72, no doubt after many years

at sea, states (MR# 87):

> ONCE A MARINER OF THE DEEP
> NOW LYING IN SILENT SLEEP
> WAITING THE TRUMPET SOUND

Like Davidson's gravestone, Gilbert's also includes an anchor symbol, which

both identifies him as a mariner and reinforces the idea of hope. Emma Hill, a sailor's

wife from Liverpool, expressed the same idea in her epitaph dedicated to "my dear

husband" Master Mariner William Hill, who died in 1891 at age 71 (MR# 117):

> THE TOILSOME VOYAGES NOW ARE PAST,
> THE WEARIED MARINER RESTS AT LAST,
> AND WHEN THE LAST TRUMPET'S CALL SHALL SOUND,
> MAY HE AMONG THE BLESSED BE FOUND.

Although expressions of faith that God would raise their loved ones at the end

of time were appropriate for those who died on land and whose bodies were present in

their graves, such sentiments were also expressed for those whose bodies were lost

beneath the waves. The parents of Benjamin Ewen used religion as a comfort when

their son was lost at sea in 1856 (MR# 271, New London Cedar Grove; Figure 58):

> IN
> Memory of
> BENJAMIN B.
> Son of John & Mary Ewen
> born July 24, 1836,
> was lost overboard at Sea
> from the Bark Alexander
> Capt. W. Bush,
> on the 30 of Nov. 1856,
> in Lat. 30° South, Long. 133° West
> while in the act of furling

the Main top gallant sail &
never was seen more.

Our God with eyes that never sleeps
Will watch our loved one in the deep
Will jealous care where now he lies
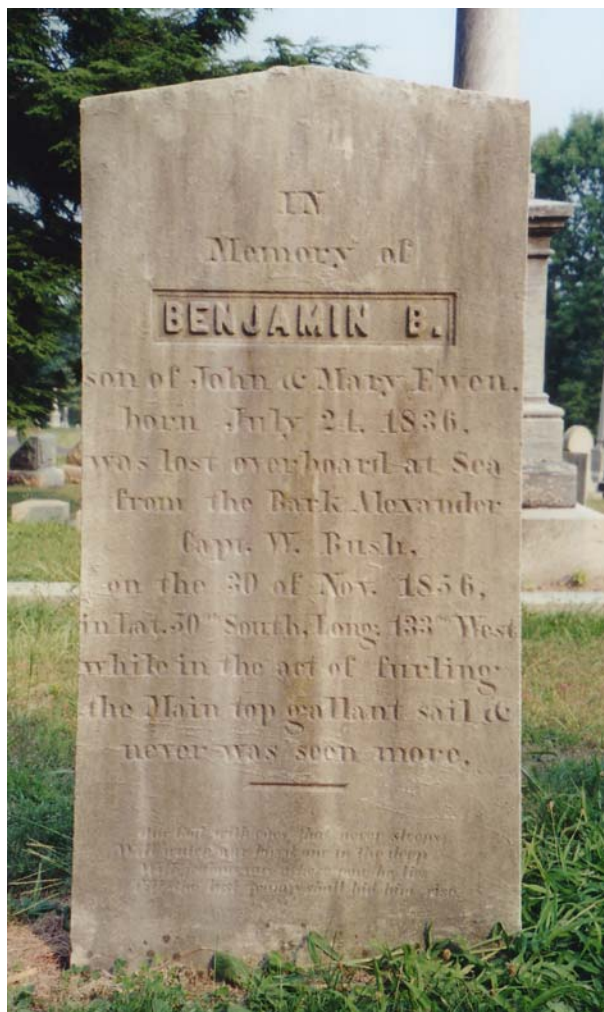Till the last trump shall bid him rise.

Figure 58. Empty grave of Benjamin Ewen, lost from barque *Alexander* in 1856. MR# 271, Cedar Grove Cemetery, New London, Connecticut.

In addition to epitaphs such as that for Benjamin Ewen, two Bible verses

associated with the sea were also used to express faith that those lost there would return

at the end of time. The phrase "When the sea shall give up her dead," a reference to

Revelations 20:13, was recorded on two memorials in England (MR# 11, Royal Navy

Cemetery, Haslar, and MR# 121, St. James's Cemetery, Liverpool) and three in the

United States (MR# 229, Old Burial Hill, Marblehead; MR# 291, Evergreen Cemetery,

Stonington; and MR# 316, Rural Cemetery, New Bedford). In all cases, it was used to

commemorate those who died at sea or who were lost at sea. For example, the verse

was used to memorialize American sailor James Graham, who died at sea in 1857

(MR# 291). In addition, Graham's gravestone also includes the epitaph, "For if we

believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God

bring with him." Once again, this reiterates the faith that God will resurrect the body

of their loved one, no matter where that body lies. In the Rural Cemetery, New

Bedford, the gravestone of John A. Peirce notes that "the grave holds not thy precious

[form]," but expresses faith that "the Sea shall give up its dead." Peirce was "lost on

board the U.S. Frigate *Cumberland*, in the naval engagement at Hampton Roads" on

the eighth of March 1862. The *Cumberland* was sunk by the Confederate ironclad CSS

Virginia (ex-USS *Merrimac*), which then went on to have the famous battle between

the *Virginia* and the Federal ironclad *Monitor*. Similarly, the verse "I shall bring my

people again from the depths of the sea" (Psalm 68:22) was also used to express faith

that God would resurrect those lost at sea. It was recorded on two English memorials.

The family of George Mant chose Psalm 68:22 to express their belief that Mant, who

was lost at sea in 1880, would return at the end of time (MR# 20). The verse also

appears on the monument for HMS *Eurydice*, which wrecked upon the Isle of Wight in

1878 with the loss of 317 lives. The elaborate memorial includes not only Psalm 68:22

but also "and the sea gave up the dead which were in it" (Revelations 20:13) and

"which hope we have as an anchor of the soul" (Hebrews 6:19). The inclusion of an

iron anchor recovered from the wreck further underscores the symbolism of hope

(Figure 59).

Figure 59. Monument for HMS *Eurydice*, which foundered off the Isle of Wight in
1878. MR# 11, Royal Navy Cemetery, Haslar, Hampshire.

Summary

Although a significant number of maritime memorials from the mid-1800s on

exhibit religious sentiment, this does not indicate that the majority of sailors suddenly

found religion at that time. Instead, analysis reveals that many of the memorials with religious themes were erected by maritime wives, parents, or other non-seafaring members of the maritime community. Thus, a number of the religious memorials can be explained as the product of the general religious revival that took place in Great Britain and the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. Maritime communities, in touch with the mainstream culture around them, seem to have participated in this revival to a greater extent than sailors themselves. Nevertheless, sailors did create a number of the religious maritime memorials. This is probably due to the impact of the Bethel movement, a crusade aimed at spreading the word of God upon the waves, that began in the early-nineteenth century.

Previous chapters have discussed the dangerous and tenuous nature of maritime life. As discussed in chapter 6, sudden death was a fact of life for mariners, who developed a set of values and beliefs for dealing with it. Chapter 8 showed how families used memorials for comfort when sailors died at sea or in foreign lands. As demonstrated, however, empty graves were never a truly adequate substitute for the missing bodies of those who never returned. It is in this light that the increase in religious sentiment in maritime communities in the mid-nineteenth century should be viewed. At that time, maritime wives and families, and to a more limited extent sailors themselves, turned to religion as a source of comfort. In the memorials, religious sentiment expressed the belief that God would protect sailors against the dangers of the sea, the hope that mariners would anchor safely in the port of heaven at the end of life's

voyage, and the faith that maritime families will meet their lost loved ones after the

Resurrection.

CHAPTER X

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the introduction to his seminal work on maritime folklore, Horace Beck (1972: xiii-xiv) commented perceptively that "because man is not indigenous to the sea, neither is folklore entirely indigenous. Rather the majority of this material comes from the land and is adjusted to fit the aquatic climate." This study of maritime memorials supports Beck's statement. Maritime memorialization practices from the Age of Sail must be viewed first and foremost as a reflection and adaptation of the mortuary rituals and attitudes towards death practiced in Anglo-American society. Throughout the period studied, sailors and maritime communities attempted to follow current memorialization trends. In doing so, however, they creatively adapted prevailing societal customs to express the values and worldview of the maritime folk group.

Hazards and Uncertainty of Maritime Life

Sailors were constantly at the mercy of the forces of nature, and numerous memorials speak of this struggle. Mariners, however, were not the only eighteenth- and nineteenth-century group who fought against the elements. Other outdoor professions, such as logging, also faced the dangers of the natural world. Like maritime lore, much of logging folklore is devoted to man's struggle against nature (Toelken 1996). As Americans moved west during the second half of the nineteenth-century, pioneers faced the hazards of the trail. According to Meyer (1990: 94-99), the

dangers of pioneer life in the West forms one of the most prominent themes in

Oregon's early cemeteries. It seems, then, that a preoccupation with danger and death

represents a theme common to groups that battled the forces of nature.

Mariners' fear of rocks and storms has provided one of the most enduring

legacies of the Age of Sail, as shown by the way that tales of shipwrecks and disaster at

sea continue to fascinate the public to this day. In 1976, Canadian folksinger Gordon

Lightfoot captured the imaginations of both Canadians and Americans with "The

Wreck of the *Edward Fitzgerald*," which described the tragic loss of that vessel in Lake

Superior in November 1975. This poignant ballad reached number 2 on the Billboard

charts and remains popular on oldies radio stations to this day

(http://gordonlightfoot.com/Lyrics/WreckOfTheEdmundFitzgerald.html). Films

featuring man's struggle against the sea remain popular also. The popularity of the

1956 film adaptation of Melville's classic *Moby Dick* resulted in a large increase of

tourists at the Seamen's Bethel in New Bedford, Massachusetts. The 1997 film *Titanic*

became one of the highest grossing motion pictures of all time, taking in over $1.8

billion worldwide. Sebastian Junger's book *The Perfect Storm* (1997), which describes

the tragic struggle of six Gloucester fishermen against the forces of nature, reached

number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list. A movie adaptation soon followed.

Most recently, the perils of storms figure prominently in the motion picture *Master and

Commander: The Far Side of the World* (2003), which is based on the novels of Patrick

O'Brian. The film also includes a scene of burial at sea, and a discussion of the pros

and cons of the nasal stitch. As can be seen, traditions that began during the Age of Sail continue to capture the imaginations of people today.

Absent Bodies

In the late-eighteenth century, the growth of individualism led to a greater concern with preserving both the memory and the physical remains of persons after death. This change in the Anglo-American attitude toward death was marked in cemeteries by an increase in permanent graves and grave markers. Like the larger society of which they were a part, maritime communities wanted to preserve their dead as well. This was complicated, however, by the fact that so many sailors died away from home. The bodies of such men were seldom returned. Seafaring communities faced this problem by preserved the memory of the missing. This often took the form of adding the names of the lost to family or collective monuments. In some cases, the missing person was provided with an actual grave. Although these remained unfilled, such empty graves provided a focus for rituals of remembrance. Despite such efforts, the inscriptions on many memorials for absent sailors clearly reveal that cenotaphs were never a fully adequate substitute for the missing body.

Maritime Religion

The mid-nineteenth century is marked by a significant increase in religious sentiment in maritime memorials. In the United States, this development was foreshadowed by a few late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century memorials with

religious themes. In England, by contrast, religion did not figure prominently in maritime memorials until the mid-nineteenth century.

The rise in religion was likely due in part to the impact of the Bethel movement. This reform movement sought to bring sailors closer to God, while also providing practical services for them. A number of religious maritime memorials erected by sailors were associated with houses of worship. Nevertheless, many memorials erected by sailors, even in places of worship, did not express religious sentiment. It seems, therefore, that the impact of the Bethel movement upon sailors was limited. Most sailors likely remained irreligious.

Moreover, most of the religious maritime memorials were erected by the wives and families of lost sailors. As mentioned previously, maritime communities were greatly affected by the loss of so many of their loved ones. Empty graves provided little comfort for maritime wives, families, and friends. It seems likely, therefore, that the upsurge in religion in the mid-nineteenth century formed another attempt to deal with the magnitude of loss suffered by maritime communities. Sailors' families turned to religion as a source of comfort to ease the pain of loss. The memorials that they erected express the faith that God would take care of their missing loved ones and that everyone would be reunited in heaven and made whole again following the Resurrection. This increase in religion was not unique to maritime communities during the first half of the nineteenth century. Rather, maritime religious memorials are a reflection of the upsurge in religious sentiment that took place in England and the United States during that time. The use of religious sentiment to mourn those lost or

buried far away, however, represented the maritime manifestation of this religious movement.

Conclusions

This study represents one way of studying the maritime peoples of the past based on listening to them through the material culture that they left behind. It is not intended, however, to claim that the study of memorials is the only way or the best way of learning about the peoples of the past. Instead, the study of memorials is merely one way of examining seafaring culture. Many other ways exist. Nautical archaeology needs to move beyond its current primary concern with technology and trade and enter the wider study of maritime society. The goal should be to attempt to understand the lives of sailors, both past and present, in their sociocultural contexts.

No matter how extensive our research, we will never know all of the emotions experienced by sailors when faced with the loss of a close shipmate. Mariners from the Age of Sail knew that they formed a unique group and that outsiders could never completely understand them. This attitude is shown by a memorial plaque from the Seamen's Bethel in New Bedford (MR# 407). The officers and crew of the ship *Abraham H. Howland* erected the plaque in honor of four shipmates who were lost at sea in 1847, and put forth their feelings on the relationship between sea and land with the following epitaph:

> None but a sailor knows how sailors feel
> When men like these are called their life to yield,
> Without a moments thought, or time to say
> Farewell; I die to live in endless day.

Captain, and Officers and crew as one,
All mourn the loss of these noble sons;
And hope when lifes rough voyage and toil is o'er,
To meet them all in Heaven to part no more.

By this let every sailor understand,
How frail is life both on the sea and land,
And look to God for peace and bliss divine:
Where saints unnumbered will forever shine.

While none but a sailor can know everything about how a sailor feels, nautical archaeologists are better equipped than most to learn as much as possible. A methodology that combines examination of all forms of material culture with ethnography and cross-cultural comparison could yield many new insights into maritime life. The best part of such an approach is that it allows us to see the humanity of the maritime folk group. Understanding human behavior is, after all, what anthropology is all about. Exploring the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of sailors and their communities should become as much a part of nautical archaeology as studying ship construction or trading systems.

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APPENDIX A

MEMORIAL RECORD DATABASE

Complete records for all of the memorials recorded by the 2002 Maritime Memorials Survey were inputted into a Microsoft Access database file. Researchers interested in obtaining a copy of this database can contact the author at the address listed in the Vita.

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