



The Aquatic Park Historic District includes walkways, gardens, a cable car turnaround, and the Streamline Moderne-style bathhouse building (upper left of photo) completed in 1939.



The visitor center's exhibits and artifacts tell stories of seafarers on the West Coast.



Historic vessels moored at Hyde Street Pier include (counter-clockwise from left) Eureka, Balclutha, Eppleton Hall, and C.A. Thayer.



For a taste of the sailor's life, board Balclutha (above) and other vessels at Hyde Street Pier.



Above: Historic engine plate. Right: Restored figurehead from the ship Centennial.

At San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park you will experience the sights, sounds, and textures of the city's seafaring past. You will get to know what life was like for the people who made their living at sea. From the wooden decks of *Balclutha*, a square-rigger that rounded Cape Horn 17 times, duck into the cramped cabins where sailors sheltered during months at sea. In the hold of the coastal schooner *C.A. Thayer* walk along the curving sides where freshly cleaned fish, layered with salt, were stacked to the ceiling.

Along Hyde Street Pier, park staff and volunteers mend lines, varnish brightwork, and tend puffing steam engines. Rangers lead a variety of programs, even high aloft in *Balclutha's* rigging. The Age of Sail environmental living program bunks school children overnight on historic vessels. At the small-boat shop craftspeople shape and bend-on steam softened planks to repair historic boats and build replicas.

In the visitor center, exhibits and hands-on activities tell you about the Gold Rush, shipwrecks, communications at sea, and more. An

interactive exhibit shows New York-San Francisco ocean routes. The spectacular lens from the Farallon lighthouse introduces the West Coast navigation story. The Aquatic Park Bathhouse building, designed in Streamline Moderne style, has Federal Arts Project murals from the 1930s. African American artist Sargent Johnson carved the stone facade.

If you're interested in pursuing maritime history in detail, Landmark Building E houses collections of artifacts, documents, vessel plans, photographs, motion picture film, books, periodicals, and oral histories.

**San Francisco and the Sea**  
While native peoples paddled the bay in reed canoes, European explorers charted the coastline. In 1776 the Spanish settled at the site of present-day San Francisco. Soon afterward ships came in search of seal and sea otter furs. In the 1820s whalers arrived, and Boston merchant ships began trading for California cowhides.

In 1849, after the discovery of gold in the Sierra Nevada foothills, the world rushed in. That year over 750 ships arrived in San Francisco. Some fortune-seekers came on sleek, American-built clipper ships, but most sailed in on just about anything

that could float. They often abandoned their vessels in the shallows. (Remains of such vessels lie today beneath the city's financial district.) "It is a city of ships, piers, and tides," wrote Chilean journalist Benjamin Vicuña Mackenna in 1852. "Large ships with railings a good distance from the beach served as residences, stores, and restaurants . . ."

The Gold Rush brought merchants, laborers, and craftspeople from around the world. By the 1870s California's burgeoning grain trade lured big European sailing ships like *Balclutha*. Fleets of schooners like *C.A. Thayer*

arrived with Douglas fir from Puget Sound. Flat-bottomed scow schooners like *Alma* sailed up the Delta into California's Central Valley. They delivered plows and seed, sewing machines and cloth, coal and oil. And they returned stacked with jute bags of hard white wheat, well suited for long-distance shipping. On San Francisco's docks the bags were hand-loaded into the holds of sailing ships bound for Europe.

After the grain trade diminished and railroads reached the lumber

mills and valleys, many sailing vessels were abandoned or scrapped. The lucky ones were refitted for other careers. *Balclutha* and *C.A. Thayer* went on to supply Alaska fisheries in the late 1800s and early 1900s. American inter-coastal steamer traffic exploded after the Panama Canal opened in 1914. West Coast shipyards opened to meet the demands of World Wars I and II.

For a time, a dazzling array of vessels crowded the San Francisco waterfront: great sailing

ships, coastal passenger steamers, military craft, and local working boats. One by one, these ships became obsolete but nonetheless treasured for their beauty and for the stories they told. In 1988 Congress established San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park to protect and preserve America's maritime past.

Left: Full-rigged ship Balclutha at Hyde Street Pier. Background: The Aquatic Park Lagoon viewed from the park's Municipal Pier.

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