

Lazaretto Stations * Student Handout 7

Station: Inspection and Disinfection

On the ship, the Lazaretto Physician and Quarantine Master were responsible for investigating the conditions of the people, the cargo, and the cleanliness of the vessel itself.

Here is a list of questions the Board of Health ("Rules and Regulations for the Government of the Lazaretto," May 17, 1799) required the physician to ask the Master or Commander upon oath once he boarded the ship:

1. What is the name of this vessel?
2. What are the names of the Captain or Commander, and the pilot?
3. Where does your vessel belong to?
4. How many men belong to this vessel?
5. Have you shipped any hands, since the commencement of your voyage and when and at what times?
6. Have you brought with you all the crew which you have taken out or shipped...voyage if not what is become of them?
7. How many passengers have you brought with you? Are they all now on board? And if not, what has become of them?
8. When did the vessel enter on her voyage?
9. What port or places has your vessel touched or traded at during the voyage and at what times did you leave them.
10. Did any sickness prevail in the harbour or on shore at any of these places and if any which port or place?
11. Did you come from a port where it is usual to grant a bill of health if you have produce it
12. (missing)
13. Have you lost any person by diseases during your voyage, if so when, in what place, and what was his or their complaint?
14. Have you any wearing apparel or bedding belonging to deceased persons on board?
15. What vessels have you met at sea during your last passage, what port were they from, Have you sent your boat on board of them, or did they send their boats on board of your vessel, had they any sick on board?
16. Yourself your people and passengers are they all now in good health?

PASSAGE 1: Excerpted from a report submitted to the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) by Rebecca H. Sell and "The Lazaretto: The Cultural Significance and Preservation Plan in the Spirit of the Burra Charter" by Rebecca H. Sell, A Thesis in Historic Preservation, Master of Science in Historic Preservation, University of Pennsylvania, 2005.

Credit: Board of Health, Philadelphia, PA

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Lazaretto Buildings Related to Disinfection

“The dead-house: A short distance in the rear of the hospital building is what is called the “dead-house,” but only a portion of which is ever used as such, the other portion being fitted up with a furnace, for burning the clothing of infected patients. It is of brick, one-story in height, and about 12 feet square, and with its ornamental porch and white columns looks quite attractive. ...”

“The Government warehouse: Across the lane from the Lazaretto physician’s house stands a large stone structure, about 120 feet front by 30 deep, belonging to the US govt, and during the quarantine season placed at the disposition of the health authorities for the storing of goods and merchandise ordered by them to be unloaded from merchant vessels or vessels of war. ...”

PASSAGE 2: Excerpts taken from *Public Ledger*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: August 14, 1879
Courtesy of the *Public Ledger*

In 1892, the Board of Health said that “all baggage, bedding, and clothing belonging to immigrants from cholera districts” had to be “disinfected.” On March 23 and May 13 of 1893, a Philadelphia newspaper - the *Public Ledger* said that the Board of Health was unfair to disinfect “all steerage baggage.” The Board of Health did not think they were ruining “the personal” items of steerage passengers. The Board said that steerage passengers do not have belongings that are worth very much. In fact, the Board said the steerage items would “not...suffer from exposure to steam for a short period.”

PASSAGE 3: Quotations taken from Morman, E.T. “Guarding against alien impurities: the Philadelphia Lazaretto, 1854-1893” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 1984;108 (2):131-52; quotations from p. 139, Courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

“Everything leaving the Lazaretto was thoroughly disinfected...On the first floor of east wing there was an apparatus for disinfecting the mail from patients to the outside. Heated by alcohol and held at a dry heat temperature of between 300 and 400 degrees, all outgoing mail was treated and marked “sterilized” on the envelope before being forwarded to the local post office.”

PASSAGE 4: From The Philadelphia Maritime Exchange, *Hand Book of the Lower Delaware River, ports, tides, pilots, quarantine stations, light-house service, life-saving and maritime reporting stations* (Philadelphia: George S. Harris and Sons, printers, 1895)
<http://www.archive.org/details/handbookoflowerd00philrich>