

## Station: INSPECTION AND DISINFECTION

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

1. What are the three things that the lazaretto physician and the quarantine master inspect on a vessel?

The physician and quarantine master would inspect the people, the cargo, and the sanitary condition of the vessel (EXTRA: This included the water supply and water closets.)

2. Why do you think it would be important to know from where a vessel is coming?

Certain ports might be infected with disease. EXTRA: Although the physicians did not know that Yellow Fever was carried by mosquitos, they did figure out that ships from southern climates were more likely to harbor the disease.

3. Why is the physician asking a lot of questions about the number of people of and crew on board, and if they are all accounted for?

The physician needs to make sure that no person died of a contagious disease. In order to do this, he need to know how many people the vessel left with and how many are on board now. If any person died, he needs to know how they died.

4. Question 14 asks about "apparel or bedding belonging to deceased persons." If the commander did have apparel belonging to someone who died from disease, what do you think the quarantine station might do with it? (Hint: see PASSAGE 2. )

They were burned in the furnace at the "Dead House."

5. If you had to add a question to the physician's list, what else would you ask?

Students answer may vary. The question address the ships commander about the condition of the people, cargo, or condition of the vessel,

6. Is the list of questions from the "Rules and Regulations for the Government of the Lazaretto, May 17, 1799," a primary resource? Explain your response.

Yes. These questions were created by the governing body of the Lazaretto for the physician to ask incoming ship commanders. It was created at the time of the operation of the Lazaretto and used by the physician in his routine inspections.

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

7. Name two buildings at the Quarantine Station that help to inspect and disinfect for disease. Then explain the function of the buildings.

The dead-house not only held the dead, but held a furnace “for burning the clothing of infected patients.” The Government warehouse was used to store cargo that was in question.

PASSAGE 3: 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

6. Cholera can be spread from person to person through clothing and bedding of the sick or diseased. But yellow fever was only transmitted through mosquitoes. Cleansing or burning affected materials was common. What did the newspapers say about “disinfecting” steerage passengers and their belongings?

The newspapers thought it was “unfair” that immigrants from “cholera districts” had to be “disinfected.” “all baggage, bedding, and clothing belonging to immigrants...”

7. What did the Board of Health say about disinfecting the immigrants’ belongings?

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.” In other words, the Board thought the steerage immigrants were so poor that some hot water was not going to ruin the little that they owned.

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>

8. How was the mail treated before it left the Lazaretto Immigration station in the 1800s?

Even the mail was exposed to heat and “alcohol” to kill off any diseases. It was a “dry heat temperature of 300 or 400 degrees” and the mail was also “heated by alcohol” (EXTRA INFO: By the late 1800s, doctors understood that both heat and alcohol could work like an antiseptic and kill off any microorganisms or germs.)

9. Why was the mail treated in this manner?

All “outgoing mail was treated and marked sterilized” so people on the outside of the Lazaretto would not get sick from the patients staying at the Lazaretto. This kept the disease from getting outside of the Lazaretto – even through the mail!