### **Lesson Five**

Objective Match: The Period of Rapid Population Growth, Large-Scale Agriculture, Linkage to the Rest of the United States Era Match: 1891-1900

#### THE CREW OF THE RATHDOWN

More than any other state in our country, California is probably the most culturally diverse. What surprises most of us is that it has always been that way. Waves of immigrants have come with great expectations and have established themselves in neighborhoods and sometimes entire communities. Many of the newcomers were met with prejudice and hostility, but many of them found the most welcoming of hands in our main coastal city, San Francisco.

Some historians believe it is because some of the first newcomers, beginning with the Spanish during the age of exploration and then later during the Gold Rush the Mexicans, Chinese, Chileans, Europeans, and Americans were sailors. For centuries sailors have been confined to small living spaces with crew members of different nationalities a, races, and ethnicities. This bred a need for tolerance among all members of the crew, because in work as dangerous as that of a sailor you had to depend upon your crew mate for survival. San Francisco has been known has a compassionate as well as a tolerant city only because some of its first residents were people who had sailed on ships like the *Balclutha* and the *Rathdown*.

#### What to know:

This lesson plan is built around the exploration of a deepwater sailing ship that was much like the *Balclutha*. The *Rathdown* a full-rigged ship built in Ireland in 1891 and made voyages all over the world including San Francisco. Because of its design, like *Balclutha* a steel-hulled cargo carrier, we assume that she carried some of the same types of materials like coal and grain. Both ships were similar in that they made trips all over the world; carryin a wide variety of cargos, like nitrates, guano (used as fertilizer), and lumber.

Some of the differences between the two must be noted. The *Rathdown* was larger than *Balclutha*; 30 feet longer and 11 feet wider, and weighed almost 400 tons more. And while the *Balclutha* had a long life and can still be seen today at San Francisco Maritime NHP, the *Rathdown*'s life was cut short by an apparent maritime disaster. The word "apparent" is used because no one ever saw the ship after it left Yokohama, Japan, on October 4, 1900. She and her crew were listed as missing at sea.

Our Library at San Francisco Maritime has over 200,000 images but we do not have an image of *Balclutha*'s crew during her days as a bulk cargo ship used in the grain trade, but we do have a photograph of the *Rathdown*'s crew.

# **Purpose:**

- Using the information acquired from their *Tour of Balclutha*, students will be able to classify the members of the *Rathdown*'s crew, for example whether they were the officers, sailors, or apprentices.
- Sailors had to trust in their shipmate. What does a crew like the *Rathdown*'s tell us about race relations aboard sailing ships? Did this tolerance have an impact on seaports like San Francisco, where many sailors settled?

#### What to do:

Materials: photocopies of the Rathdown crew photo, List of Questions, drawing paper, pencils, and erasers. (Option: If the students have been keeping a Sea Journal, you can have them do the activity into that notebook)

# **Suggested Procedure:**

1. Students will be reminded that sailors risked their lives everyday while performing their duties aboard ships like *Balclutha*. When you were a sailor you depended upon your shipmates to do their jobs expertly and safely and when they didn't it could result in someone getting injured or killed. Unfortunately, there isn't a picture of the sailors of *Balclutha*'s grain trade days, but there is available a photograph of a crew from a ship much like *Balclutha* called the *Rathdown*.

- 2. Students will break into their groups (4-5 per group) and each group will be given a copy of the historic photograph.
- 3. Each group will study the photograph and answer the questions regarding the photo.
- 4. After the groups have answered the questions, each student will return to their desk and draw a picture of what they think the crew of the *Balclutha* looked like. (Optional Activity: If the students have been keeping a Sea Journal, have them draw their *Balclutha* crew picture in it.)

## Photograph of the Crew of the *Rathdown*

The *Rathdown* was a ship in many ways like *Balclutha*. She was built in Great Britain in 1891 and her home port was Belfast, Ireland. She was a bulk-cargo carrier, which meant that she probably carried some of the same things that *Balclutha* carried, like coal from Britain and grain from California . She was unlike *Balclutha* in a couple of ways. She was a larger ship, almost 30 feet longer and over 400 tons heavier. And while you can visit *Balclutha* today, the *Rathdown* was short lived. No one ever saw the ship after it left Yokohama, Japan, on October 4, 1900. She and her crew were listed as missing at sea five months later. The date of the crew photograph is unknown.

## List of Questions

- 1. Using the photograph, indicate which people in the photograph were the abled-bodied sailors, apprentices, and officers. Can you tell anything by the way they are dressed or even how they are standing that would indicate their rank? Which one do you think is the captain? Given what you learned on your trip to the *Balclutha* do you think this is a photograph of the entire crew? If not, why do you think so?
- 2. Unlike the *Balclutha*, which traveled from California to Europe, the *Rathdown* sailed all over the world and acquired her crew from places where she stopped. Because of this, not everyone spoke the same language, believed in the same religion, or even ate the same kinds of food. What would make people of different backgrounds get along together aboard a sailing ship for months at a time?
- 3. Seaports like San Francisco were settled by sailors like those from the *Rathdown*. What kind of impact do you think that sailors, who were tolerant of people's differences, had on San Francisco?