

CELTIC KNOTS



Knowledge Tied Together For Your Reading Pleasure

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Not many people know that most of San Francisco's Financial District was built on landfill over what was once Yerba Buena Cove. The shoreline of the cove reached as far inland as Montgomery St. where the Transamerica Pyramid building is. In the late 1840's there were 40 some sailing ships either run aground or abandoned in the cove because passengers and crew took off in the hysteria that was California's gold rush. One master ship, the Arkansas, came through the Gate in a storm and was damaged on the rocks of Bird Island (later named Alcatraz). It was then towed to the cove and abandoned at the future Intersection of Battery and Pacific streets.

Along came a fellow named Joe Anthony who built a gang plank out to it, cut a doorway in the side and turned it into arguably the first bar in San Francisco. As landfill finally enveloped the ship, old Joe cut the masts off and built a hotel over the top of it and preserved the bar in the basement.

Joe Anthony, being the entrepreneur he was, went into the Shanghai business. Guests headed for the gold country staying overnight in his hotel who ventured down to the bar, woke up the next morning out to sea on their way to the Orient. Joe got paid for every live body he supplied to ships needing a crew, waiting to depart. Sometimes the guy didn't survive the drugs or the rap on the head.

That practice continued until there was a terrible mistake. One night Old Joe got a rap on his head and woke up to find himself on a trip to China. The hotel was later destroyed in the 1906 earthquake and fire.

While on one of my walks in San Francisco I ran into the "Old Ship Saloon and Restaurant" that sits on the exact spot. There are very interesting pictures and other memorabilia on the walls. Google "old ship saloon San Francisco" for more information.

I hope you have enjoyed this piece of San Francisco history.