

H-Net Reviews

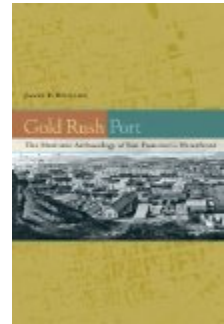
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

James P. Delgado. *Gold Rush Port: The Maritime Archaeology of San Francisco's Waterfront*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. Illustrations. xiv + 238 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-520-25580-7.

Reviewed by Della Scott-Ireton (Florida Public Archaeology Network)

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The Role of Entrepreneurs, Ships, and Fire in the Development of San Francisco's Maritime Cultural Landscape

Eminent nautical archaeologist James P. Delgado is perhaps one of the most well-known practitioners in this small field. President of the Institute of Nautical Archaeology (<http://inadiscover.com>), Delgado has appeared on numerous television documentaries and hosted the program *The Sea Hunters*, and is a prolific author (see, for example, his edited collection *Encyclopedia of Underwater and Maritime Archaeology* [1997] and *Khubilai Khan's Lost Fleet: In Search of a Legendary Armada* [2009]). In *Gold Rush Port*, Delgado returns to his scholarly roots—an earlier version of the manuscript formed the basis of his doctoral dissertation—to provide a theoretical foundation for the development of the port of San Francisco based on archaeological data.

Delgado uses the principles of Immanuel Wallerstein's world systems theory to examine not only the rapid growth of San Francisco as a major maritime city, but also the port's continuing success as an entrepôt. Jump-started by the Gold Rush of 1849-50, San Francisco's urban development focused on the city's waterfront as the locus for maritime trade and supply connections between the ocean and the inland gold fields. Due to the area's geography, the city grew into the bay, rather than into the interior, as demand for waterfront mercantile access increased. This resulted in much of the modern city being built on "made land" encompassing filled-in wharfs and docks, as well as the remains of ocean-going vessels that had been turned into permanently moored, floating warehouses, or storeships. Delgado's research

focuses on the archaeologically recovered artifact assemblages from two of these storeships, as well as on the assemblages from two stores. All four of these archaeological sites were created when a fire ravaged the San Francisco waterfront in 1851 and the resulting damaged area was covered with millions of cubic yards of landfill. Although the sites were impacted by subsequent excavation for construction, the inclusion of archaeology and historic preservation as part of modern community development and planning allowed the unique heritage of this Gold Rush-era port to be studied. Delgado compares the recovered material culture with historically documented cargoes to illuminate the development of San Francisco as the United States' primary port on the Pacific Ocean and as key to the integration of the Pacific into the world economic system.

Gold Rush Port is organized into eight chapters, including an introduction, a review of "Theoretical Perspectives," "Global Maritime Connections in the Pacific before the Gold Rush," "Development of the Gold Rush San Francisco Waterfront," "The Commission Merchants," "The Archaeology of Gold Rush San Francisco's Waterfront," "Gold Rush Cargoes," and "San Francisco and the Nineteenth-Century World Maritime System." Appendices feature merchant information from contemporary newspapers; a description of what a "typical" storeship would have looked like in terms of size, rig, and date and place of construction; and a list of cargo stored as merchandise onboard one of these storeships. Tables, draw-

ings, maps, historic photographs, and excavation images help to illustrate the locations and information presented.

I cannot find much to criticize in *Gold Rush Port*. The manuscript could have used more rigorous editing, as several typographical errors were distracting and a couple caused momentary confusion. Color images would have been nice but the lack does not detract from the valuable information. Overall, this volume not only presents a thoughtful and scholarly discussion of the development of one of the nation's most vibrant maritime

cities, but also is a case study for how examination of the maritime cultural landscape informs understanding of both the local urban environment and the global economic system. In a field that often values historical particularism and practical application over theoretical discourse, *Gold Rush Port* is an excellent example of the utility of allying maritime archaeological methods more closely with theoretical foundations. As such, this work will appeal to both students and professionals in maritime archaeology, urban development, cultural resource management, and heritage studies.

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