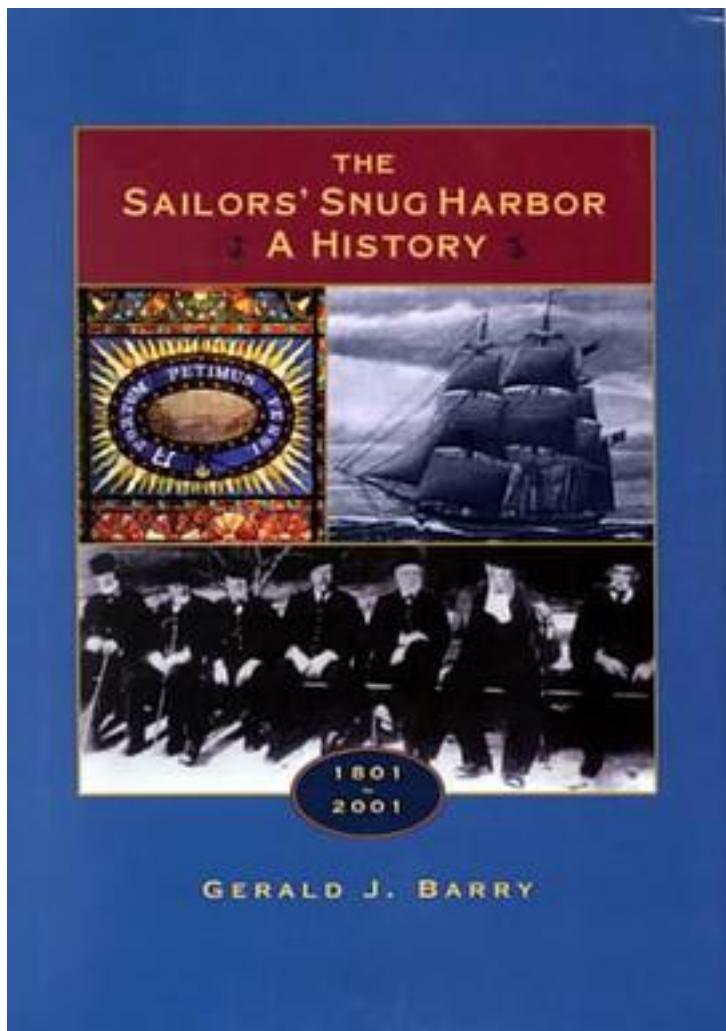


# The Sailors' Snug Harbor



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Four days before his death on June 5th, 1801, Robert Richard Randall signed a

remarkable will, which provided that his mansion and 21-acre farm be used to maintain and support aged, decrepit, and worn out sailors. However, as the 1820's approached, and land values began to soar, the legislature was asked to modify the Randall will so that Sailor's Snug Harbor could be built somewhere other than the Randall farm. In May 1831, a 130-acre farm overlooking Upper New York Bay and the Kill van Kull was purchased on Staten Island for \$10,000. Year-by-year, buildings were added until there were 55 major structures. The Harbor produced its own electricity and steam, grew its own food, and had its own water supply, a church, cemetery, hospital, theater, library. At the start of the twentieth century, more than 1,000 old sailors were in residence. Beginning in 1950, as part of a 'modernization and improvement plan,' two dozen buildings on the Staten Island property were bulldozed. Next on the destruction list were the Sailors' Snug Harbor dormitories which would be replaced by a 120-room modern infirmary insisted upon by the State Department of Health. At this point, the city's new Landmarks Preservation Commission stepped in. On October 14, 1965, at its first designation hearing, the Commission landmarked and saved the old dormitories. Property for a new institution for the old sailors was found in Sea Level, North Carolina, down the road from a hospital just taken over by Duke University Medical Center. Citing the proximity of Duke's hospital to the new Harbor site, New York's surrogate court approved relocation. Mayor John Lindsay, in June 1973, announced a plan to turn the Sailors' Snug Harbor buildings into a national showplace of culture and education. Over the years, the Sailors' Snug Harbor has housed various cultural institutions, including the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Arts, the Staten Island Botanical Gardens, and the Staten Island Children's Museum. Today, Snug Harbor is the most important cultural asset on Staten Island, and one of the fastest-growing arts centers in the city

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目录:

[The Sailors' Snug Harbor 下载链接1](#)

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