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HISTORIAN ROBERT ERIC BARDE TO DELIVER TALK ON GOLDEN GATE IMMIGRATION

(Vallejo, CA – November 18, 2008)... U-Cal Berkeley historian Robert Eric Barde comes to Cal Maritime Thursday, Dec. 11th for a talk based on his new book, *Immigration at the Golden Gate: Passenger Ships, Exclusion and Angel Island.* The presentation will take place at 7 p.m. in Peachman Auditorium on the Vallejo campus. The lecture is free and open to the public.

Barde notes that while many may think of Angel Island as similar to New York's Ellis Island as a place of welcome for immigrants, it was more commonly a roadblock to many Asians. They knew it as a grim and uncertain way-station for those waiting to learn whether they would be allowed to enter the country in the face of increasingly Draconian immigration laws.

"In the overall scheme of immigration, Angel Island was a relative latecomer," Mr. Barde explains. "When the California Gold Rush drew immigrants to the west coast, all foreigners were able to enter the country more or less without restriction. They simply arrived by ship, disembarked and looked for work. However, after the Gold Rush diminished and the trans-continental railroad was completed, the California economy suffered a series of downturns, creating strong political pressure to reduce or even halt Chinese immigration. In 1882 the U.S. Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which cut arrival numbers from a peak of about 40,000 the year before the law went into effect to just 10 in 1883. That's not a typo....ten."

The Immigration Station on Angel Island was not completed until 1908 and wasn't opened until 1910. Some Chinese were allowed in if they met strict criteria, but it was overcoming the hurdles, coupled with efforts to get around them by subterfuge, which led in part to the Angel Island saga. If immigration officials believed people were lying about their circumstances, or didn't meet the required criteria, they could order them held pending investigation. This might take a week to a month, but in some cases it could last for over a year. Meanwhile the costs of "detaining" the individual would be charged to the owners of the shipping company which brought them. It was in the interests of the company, therefore, to avoid carrying passengers who might not pass muster."

Mr. Barde's talk will focus on how the immigration process affected the maritime industry at San Francisco—not only the detention facilities at Angel Island and elsewhere, but the ships and shipping companies which specialized in the immigration trade on the West Coast.

Visit www.greenwood.com/catalog/C34782.aspx for more details on his on his book.

"Anyone interested in the rich history of West Coast immigration will enjoy Mr. Barde's talk," said Dr. Timothy Lynch, Maritime History Professor with Cal Maritime's Department of Maritime Policy and Management. "The important role steamship companies played in immigration, and the impact that government policies had on those operations, were profound. This is a great opportunity to hear that story."