

# NEWSLETTER

## Friends of Civil War Alcatraz

June 2018

Editor: Steve Johnson

**Meet the Supervising Ranger of Alcatraz** Imagine having to supervise 10 rangers, along with interns, volunteers, garden and maintenance crews, co-ordinate with two other organizations (the Conservancy and Alcatraz Cruises), and being responsible for the safety of 5,000 visitors a day, not to mention running meetings, setting up schedules, evaluating programs, ensuring the buildings are protected, and working out a budget for a National Park. This is a formidable position, not for the weak of heart, and fortunately we have a ranger who is up to the task. A few months ago a new supervisor was appointed to Alcatraz National Park — Ranger Emily Levine.



Emily grew up outside of Boston, received her history degree from New York University and her M.A. in Museum Education from Tufts University. She became a volunteer at Lowell NHP, where she enjoyed interpreting industrial history; eventually she was hired as a ranger there. Because of her lifelong interest in public lands and history, being a ranger was a perfect fit for her. At Lowell she developed community outreach strategies and interpretive programs for families. In 2015, she moved to California to accept the position of Interpretive Site Supervisor of Muir Woods. It was an excellent learning experience for her, where the intersection of natural and cultural history is the focus of many programs.

Emily was excited at the opportunity to become the site supervisor of Alcatraz, because it goes back to her educational roots and previous experience in museum history; Alcatraz is, after all, a museum with many themes. She has been very grateful to the Alcatraz staff in being so welcoming and supportive, and loves the many layers of history on the island. And while being an Easterner unfamiliar with the Civil War history of the island, Emily has shown an eagerness to learn more about that segment of Alcatraz history. She has expressed gratitude to the Friends of Civil War Alcatraz for the programs we do, and witnessed the FOCWA activities at the last Living History Day in April (We might even see her in an 1860's dress next time!) She looks forward to working with us in developing creative and relevant ways to tell the story of Fort Alcatraz to the public.

### Dates to Remember

**Sat.-Sun, June 16 - 17, 2018**

Civil War Days, Angel Island State Park

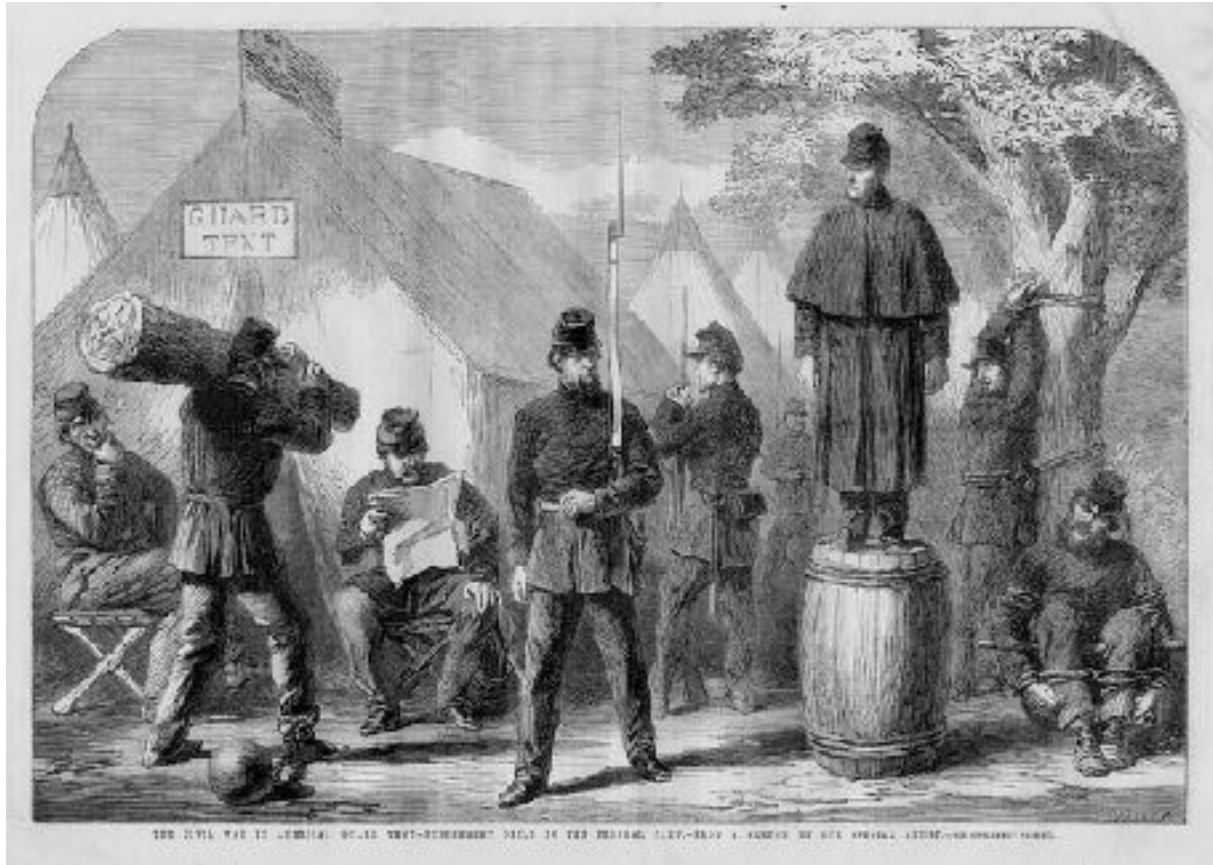
**Tuesday, June 19, 2018**

Peninsula CW Roundtable  
"The Battle of Spotsylvania Court House" by Walter Day,  
11:30 am

**Thursday, June 21, 2018**

SF CW Roundtable Lecture  
"The Generals of Shiloh" by  
author Larry Tagg 6:30 pm  
dinner, 7:15 pm talk

**Union Army Discipline** The Army always had to deal with soldiers who violated the rules or committed crimes. This was especially true of the many volunteers who joined or were conscripted during the war. These volunteers had a keen sense of individual rights (many companies - especially from New England - elected their own officers) and resented orders they felt were unfair or undemocratic. Naturally, the Army had a different view — that orders were to be obeyed without question. For minor violations, such as returning late from leave or disorderly conduct, the punishment would be loss of pay, extra sentry duty, or digging latrines. For more serious violations, such as theft or fighting, each branch of the Army had its own form of punishment.



In the infantry, carrying a log on sentry duty or standing on a barrel with a sign stating the offense was common. Worse still was the custom known as “bucking and gagging”, in which the soldier was gagged and had his arms tied to his legs while sitting, and a rod placed through his knees. The cavalry had a particularly nasty punishment — sitting on a thin sawhorse, sometimes with weights on the feet.

A volunteer at a National Military Park demonstrates — briefly — the use of the “Spanish donkey” as a form of punishment.





In the artillery, the offending soldier would be stretched across a wagon wheel, which would be turned in various positions to make it very uncomfortable for him — particularly in the upside-down position.

What about punishments on Alcatraz? It should be noted that all the above mentioned punishments were more common in the eastern theater of the Civil War. On Alcatraz it was usual for wayward soldiers to receive a loss of pay or extra sentry duty for lesser offenses, and for serious offenses hard physical labor, such as breaking rocks or shoveling dirt, was the typical punishment.

Sometimes the prisoner-soldiers wore a ball and chain wherever they went. Sleeping in less-than-desirable barracks and a diet of bread and water was also known to happen. It wasn't until the 1920's that the Army adopted a program to rehabilitate soldiers rather than to simply punish them, and this became a new chapter in the history of punishment on Alcatraz.

## **Coming Events**

**Interpretive Training June 2-3** In Alcatraz Chapel, 2:30 - 4:30, Themes of Incarceration

**Civil War Days on Angel Island State Park, June 16 - 17**

**Living History Day at Fort Point NHS, August 18**

## **Resources:**

<https://www.facebook.com/SanFranciscoCivilWarRoundTable/>

<http://www.peninsulacivilwarroundtable.org>

“The Civil War’s Common Soldier” [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/civil\\_war\\_series/3/sec3.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/civil_war_series/3/sec3.htm)

*Hard Tack and Coffee: Soldier’s Life in the Civil War* by John D. Billings