

NEWSLETTER

Friends of Civil War Alcatraz

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Living History Day at Fort Point

Fort Point National Historic Monument held a Living History Day on Saturday, August 13th. FOCWA members in attendance were Mike Bennet, Constance Smith, Ken Felton, Steve Johnson, and Matt Hess. Also present were the members of the National Civil War Association and the American Civil War Association, many of whom represented the 20th Manine. The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War was also represented. We had two display tables - one with information about FOCWA and the SUVCW, and one showing the equipment carried by a Civil War soldier. Steve and Mike Bennett gave tours of the Fort, Constance did cooking demonstrations, Ken and Matt manned the tables. We were pleasantly surprised when a unit of the U.S. Naval Sea Cadets came to visit in period uniforms of the 1860s Navy. They were given the task of lowering and folding the garrison flag at the end of the day — never an easy task with the wind — but they performed the task very well. We had a good amount of visitors who seemed very interested in all the activities, especially the cannon drill and the flag ceremonies. The reenactors have already committed to returning in January, so if you missed this event you will have another opportunity to join us in January.

Dates to Remember

Saturday, October 1
Living History Day
on Alcatraz, 8am - 4 pm

Saturday, January 28
Living History Day
Fort Point
10 am - 5 pm



Naval Sea Cadets fold the flag, while 30 soldiers nearby present arms.

Living History Day on Alcatraz

The Park Service has approved another Living History Day on the island, to be held on Saturday, October 1st. Like the similar event last July, the band will be coming to play and we will be providing box lunches for participants. We will need a number of volunteers to help with manning the three display tables — an information table with FOCWA/SUVCW brochures, a display table of equipment carried by a soldier, and a medicine table showing common remedies of the 1860s. Volunteers will need to be at Pier 33 at 8 am to take the staff boat to the island. Typically we take the 4 pm boat back to Pier 33 but people can leave earlier if they need to. We will be contacting members by email to find out who will be able to help that day. This is another premier event to educate the public about the Civil War history of Alcatraz, which is the mission of FOCWA.

Alcatraz Notes

Masks will no longer be required on the boats or on the island after Labor Day. Individuals can still wear them if they wish, of course. The snowy egrets and herons have left the island, but there are still some cormorants and gulls nesting on the island. Ranger Wendy, the volunteer coordinator for the island, has returned from leave and is on the island on Tuesdays - Saturdays. She or Ranger Matt will be assisting us on the Living History Day.

The Springfield Rifled Musket

The common weapon on both sides during the Civil War was the Springfield Rifled Musket, which got its name from the Springfield, Massachusetts armory which designed it. Its basic design was a 40” barrel that had three twists inside, a nipple on which the percussion cap was placed, a hammer connected to the trigger, a wooden stock, and a ramrod specifically



shaped so it wouldn't deform the soft-lead Minie Ball.¹ The rate of fire for a well-trained soldier was three shots per minute. Over a million of these muskets were produced by several manufactures, at a cost of \$20 each (about a month's salary in those days). The musket featured two iron sights ("leaves") which allowed the rifleman to sight his target for 300 yards (one leaf) or 500 yards (two leaves). The French-designed 58-caliber Minnie ball could do a lot of damage, breaking bones and destroying tissues. The was the cause of most casualties of the war. The other common weapon of the time was the British-made Enfield Muskatoon (a shorter version of the musket). The South managed to buy these and other weapons and get them through the blockade during much of the war.²

¹ "Springfield Model 1861" at Gun Wiki https://guns.fandom.com/wiki/Springfield_Model_1861

² "How the Union Failed to Successfully Blockade the South" by Jack Trammel <https://www.historynet.com/blockade-in-name-only/>