



NEWSLETTER

Friends of Civil War Alcatraz



January 2026

Steve Johnson, Editor

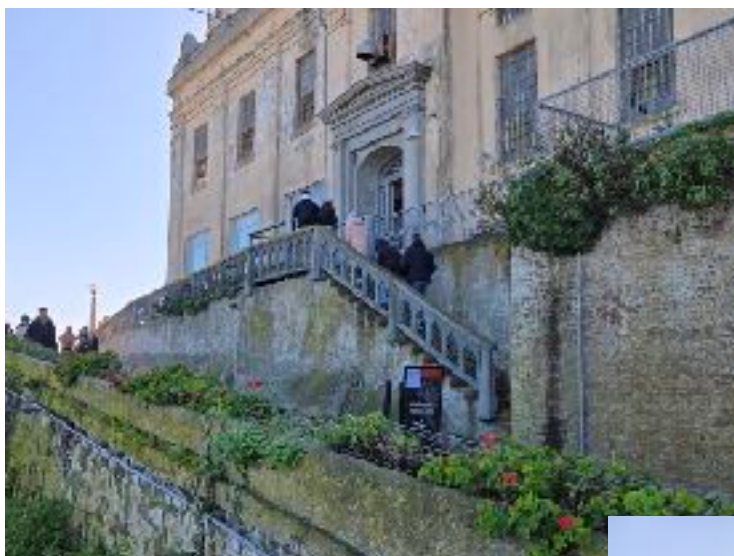
In this issue: The Furthestmost Battle in the Civil War

Island News - Big Changes

A great deal of construction is going on in many parts of the cell house, which has made many changes in the places where visitors can go and in the places where guides can take visitors for behind-the-scenes tours. These areas are now closed off to everyone: the dining hall; the infirmary; part of A-block; the chapel and gun gallery. The chapel can be accessed only if there is a ranger nearby who has the key to access the upstairs. Visitors now enter the cell house via the stairs on the east side of the building, and receive the audio tour just inside. The audio tour starts in B-block, winds back along C-block (Broadway), goes to D-block, through the library, and ends near the north entrance to the cell house. The audio tour

Dates to Remember

Saturday, February 7
Living History Day



Visitors enter cell house

Scaffolding on NE side of the cell house

walking tours of the island and are encouraged to do so. The numbers of visitors has been quite high during the holidays; close to 10,000 visitors came to the island the weekend of December 12 - 14. Volunteers are asked to line up in the staff line when taking the staff boat; if taking a different boat talk to security.

has been changed by adding information about incarceration around the United States, and about the aftermath of the Indian occupation on the island (1969-1971). Tours of the citadel are still possible, and the New Industries Building is open when there is enough staff. Currently there are 10 permanent and 3 seasonal rangers on the island. Ranger Roger Fang is acting site supervisor ranger when supervisor Ranger Angel Garcia is not on the island. Volunteers can still give



Elections of Officers for 2026

The current board of directors have generously offered to volunteer another year as members of the board for 2026. These members are: Gary Hormel, chairman; Steve Johnson, treasurer; Constance Smith, secretary; John Ferris, memberships; Frank Avila, board member. If you wish to serve on the board contact us. You will be receiving a ballot in the mail - it is very important you send in your ballot for this election of our board members, in keeping with our by-laws and regulations by the state of California. Also, if you have not yet renewed your dues please go to this link: <http://www.friendsofcivilwaralcatraz.org/membership.htm>

Living History Day at Fort Point

Once again Fort Point will host a Living History Day on Saturday, February 7, 2026. We will be expecting the 20th Maine re-enactors, the Wandering Bow string band, and a variety of re-enactors who will show visitors what it was like to be a soldier there in the 1860s. Several women will be there to talk about medicines, clothing, and household items of that time period. Music, lectures, cannon demonstrations, and tours of the fort will be part of the day's activities. As always, admission is free and the hours are 10 am to 4 pm.



What Was the Furthestmost Western Battle in the Civil War?

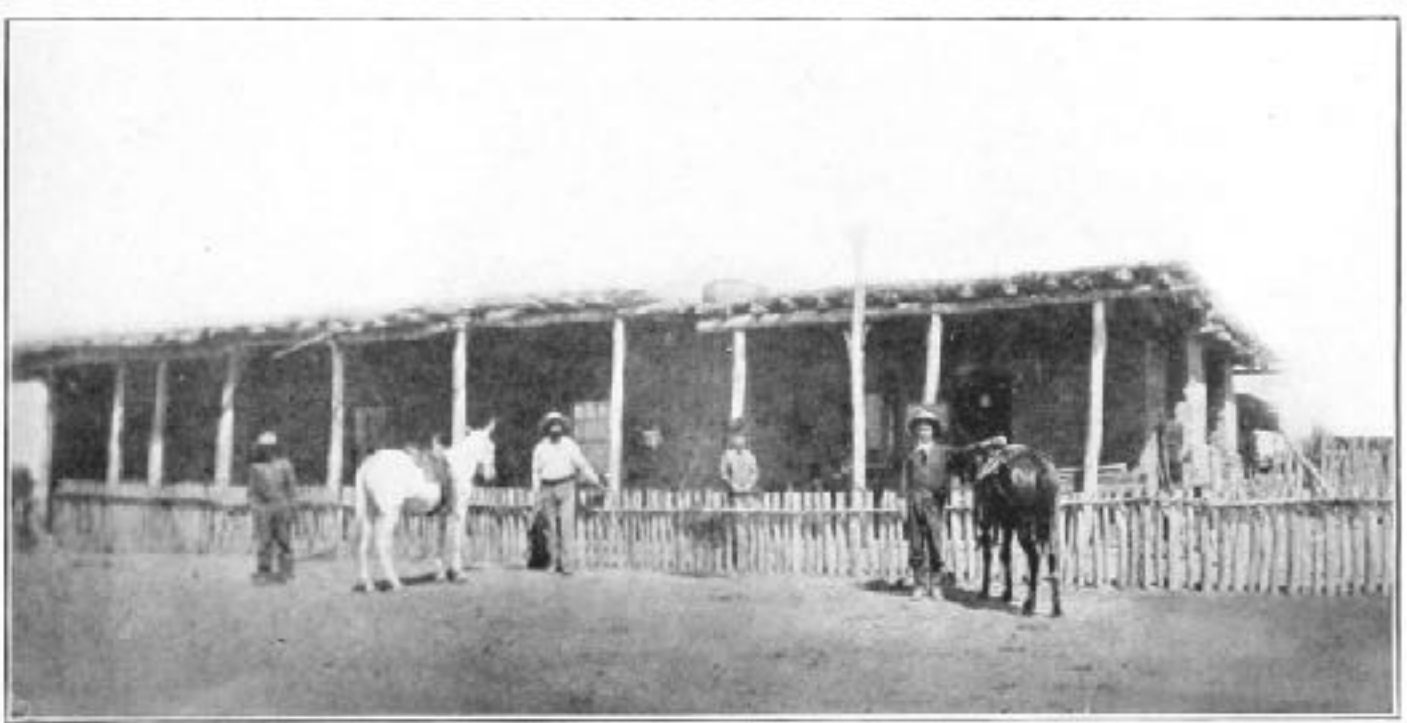
We sometimes say that the furthestmost battle in the Civil War took place at Picacho Pass in Arizona Territory on April 15, 1862. To be more accurate, it was more of a skirmish than a battle. (A skirmish is a small, brief, and unplanned clash - usually between scouting parties). At that encounter, two California cavalry troops were killed and 3 Confederate troops were captured.¹

However, there was a previous skirmish that occurred on March 29th of that year between 272 Union troops of the California column and a small detachment of Confederate soldiers under the command of Lt. John Swilling. The place was Stanwix Station, previously known as Grinnel's ranch, and was located about 6 miles from Agua Caliente. It had been a stop along the Butterfield Stagecoach line, and was being used as a waystation for Union troops where hay was stored for the horses. The Confederates were in the process of burning that hay when they were surprised by the sudden appearance of the Union cavalry. A short gunfight took place, and the Confederates, seeing they were outnumbered, withdrew and made their way back to Tucson. One Union trooper was injured, while the Confederates had no casualties.

This event was significant because by burning the hay here and at other locations, the Confederates were able to slow the California cavalry's advance towards Tucson. Also, Swilling warned Captain Hunter in Tucson of the Union cavalry's presence; he in turn sent out scouts to guard the pass through Picacho Mountain, which set the stage for that later and larger skirmish.²

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Picacho_Pass

² https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Battle_of_Stanwix_Station



Stanwix Station in the 1870s; the original station was the section with the first 4 poles on the left

Eventually the Union forces were able to re-take Tucson and chase out the dwindling number of Confederates in the territory, who struggled against thirst, lack of food, and Apache attacks on their way back to Texas. The U.S. Congress, in February of 1863, passed a bill making Arizona a United States Territory, with its capital as Prescott.³

This was another chapter in the story of California troops, many from the San Francisco Bay Area, who defended the West against incursions by Confederate forces, who had hoped to expand their reach all the way to the Pacific.



Fort Point 2025: Raising the Flag, A Visit by Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arizona_Territory