

# NEWSLETTER

## Friends of Civil War Alcatraz

February 2017

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### Resources on California and the Civil War

When talking about the history of Fort Alcatraz, it is important to place it in the context of what was going on in California at the time. Here are points to consider when discussing this issue with visitors:

**1. California was extremely valuable** because of gold and silver. Gold - especially from the Empire Mine - was producing a million dollars of gold a month, and the huge strike of silver ore in Nevada in 1859 brought huge amounts of money to San Francisco. Most of these precious metals were shipped to the east coast, where it supported the Union economy during the war.

#### Dates to Remember

**Thursday, Feb. 16, 2017**

San Francisco Civil War Roundtable Lecture 7:45 pm  
"Civil War Diplomacy"

**Tuesday, Feb. 21, 2017**

Peninsula CW Roundtable Lecture: "The Porter Conspiracy" 11:30 am

**Saturday, March 25, 2017**

Living History Day, Alcatraz 8:00 am to 4 pm



The US Steamship *The California* was first commissioned to carry mail from the east coast to San Francisco. By the 1860's ships of the Pacific Mail Steamship Co. were carrying gold and silver as well as mail and passengers. Because of news of Confederate plots to hijack the gold shipments, passengers were searched for weapons, the ship's officers were armed, and soldiers were placed aboard ships heading to New York

### 2. California was a border state — but loyal to the Union

A large number of Southern Californians were from the South and supported bringing slavery here. Militias were organized to defend the Confederacy - such as the Los Angeles Rifles - and the state legislature was pro-slavery. (It voted in 1859 to split the state in two - one free state and one slave state). Union troops from Northern California had to put down this rebellion, and Congress was not interested in approving a divided California. By the time Leland Stanford (a friend of Lincoln) became governor in 1861, the state was firmly in Union control. Nevertheless, Union soldiers of the California Volunteer regiments remained in Southern California, stationed at the Drum Barracks, and the forts around San Francisco Bay remained vigilant.



The entrance to Drum Barracks in the town of Wilmington, Los Angeles County. This military post was completed in 1863 and was attached to the depot at Wilmington (formerly San Pedro) harbor, which received troops and supplies from the east coast. It was from this area that Col. Carlton led the California Column to Arizona Territory in 1862 to check the advance of the Texas Army. They had several skirmishes, after which the Texas army retreated. The Barracks today is a L.A. County museum.

### **3. California supplied more men to the Union Army per capita than any other state.**

17,000 men volunteered to join, and most of them replaced the regular army troops stationed in the West. Their duties were to protect the stagecoach routes and telegraph lines and settlers from tribes hostile to incursions by the whites into their lands. They served from the Washington Territory all the way to the deserts of Arizona. And, of course, there were California volunteers at Fort Point and Fort Alcatraz.



Troops protecting the stagecoach from Native American raids along the Santa Fe trail. Painting by Melvin Warren and courtesy of Mrs. Warren

### **4. There were Californians who fought in the eastern war.**

One hundred hand-picked men left San Francisco in December of 1862 on the steamship *Golden Age*, bound for New York. They formed what was to be known as the California Hundred. After a warm reception in New York, they made their way to Massachusetts, where they were to become Company A, 2nd Regiment of the Massachusetts cavalry. In 1863 a group of 400 California volunteers sailed east and became the “California

Battalion” joining their original 100 brethren to complete the full complement of the regiment. These men were mostly involved in efforts to stop the raids of Col. Mosby, a partisan of the Confederacy, throughout northern Virginia. In 1864 they played a key role in repulsing the invasion of Gen. Jubal Early, who came within a few miles of Washington. In 1865 the Californians fought in the last battles of the war before the surrender at Appomatox. (Source: *California Cavalrymen in the Army of the Potomac* by Roy H. Wells)

## Resources

The California State Parks has a brief summary of California and the Civil War, but even more interesting is the timeline of California events.

[http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=26775](http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=26775)

The Civil War Trust lists “Ten Facts about California and the Civil War” which neatly summarizes the importance of the state during the war. <http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/california-in-the-civil-war/10-facts-about-california.html>

*The California Gold Rush and the Coming of the Civil War* by Leonard Richards makes a good case for the premise that the admission of California in 1850 led ultimately to the secession of the Southern states and the start of the Civil War.

Peninsula Roundtable Lecture: <http://www.peninsulacivilwarroundtable.org/meeting-of-february-21-2017/>

San Francisco Roundtable Lecture: <http://www.sfcwrt.com/170216.html>

**Civil War Day at Fort Point** On Saturday, January 29th, re-enactors of the National and American Civil War Associations joined the rangers and volunteers of the National Park Service to show visitors how the fort might have looked in 1861 when Union soldiers were stationed there.

For more Civil War Day at Fort Point photos, look at the “Activities” page

