

NEWSLETTER

Friends of Civil War Alcatraz

April 2017

Editor: Steve Johnson

Living History Day on Alcatraz Thanks to the dedication of many re-enactors and FOCWA volunteers, Fort Alcatraz came alive once again as visitors saw Union soldiers and civilians all over the island as they would have in 1860. Visitors were first treated to the music of the period as the 3rd Artillery Band played at the dock. Visitors could take one of 4 tours led by FOCWA, which narrated the importance of Alcatraz in the defense of San Francisco Bay. They also saw sentries guarding the sally port, artillery soldiers in the cannon room, and could take tours of the underground remains of the citadel. New this year was the raising of the flag at the plaza in front of the administration entrance to the cell house. A flag detail ceremoniously unfolded the flag and saluted as Ranger John Cantwell raised it up the small flagpole. A bugler played “To the Colors” as other soldiers presented arms.

Dates to Remember

Tuesday, April 18, 2017

Peninsula Civil War

Roundtable Lecture:

“Asians & Pacific
Islanders in the Civil War”

11:30 a.m.

Thursday, April 20, 2017

San Francisco Civil War

Roundtable Lecture: “Fort
Sumter: The War Begins”



Members of the flag detail included several veterans who knew the proper method of folding and unfolding the flag in military style. Visitors from other countries were able to witness this ceremony, probably for the first time, on Alcatraz. L to R: John Fitzpatrick, David Saylor, Ernie Manzo, Steve Johnson, and Steve Neuburger.



Top Left: Unfolding the flag in preparation for attaching it to the flagpole rope.

Top: The flag was raised and then taken down and re-folded, and placed in a commemorative case to be given to a FOCWA member. (See next article)



Left: Mayor Techemacher of San Francisco (1861), played by Nikki Rotheneder, gives a speech to the citizens of San Francisco, reassuring them that San Francisco is well protected from foreign invasion or rebellion from within.

FOCWA Honorees Receive Flags Flown Over Alcatraz The awards committee of The Friends of Civil War Alcatraz, led by chairman Gary Hormel, decided to have a presentation on Alcatraz to thank three long-time members for their contributions to the goals of FOCWA. **Brad Schall** and **Fred Bohmfalk** were founding members of the organization who wanted to support and enhance the Park Service in its mission to tell the military history of Alcatraz. Both are veterans and have ancestors who fought for the Union during the Civil War, so it was natural that they wanted to do this. They gathered like-minded people together to found a non-profit organization in 2002 which today has 50 members. Under their leadership FOCWA has achieved these goals, which are still on-going:

1. Maintaining the existing cannon and carriage;
2. Performing cannon drills for the public;
3. Providing volunteers to interpret the Civil War history of the island;
4. Organizing Living History events on the island;
5. Raising funds to donate to the Park Service for uniforms and items for interpretation;
6. Giving presentations to the island's interpretive staff about the island's military history.



Brad Schall receives the FOCWA award, which includes a flag flown over the island. Ranger John Cantwell joins the re-enactors and FOCWA members in giving Brad a hearty "Huzzah!"

Also receiving an award that day was **John Nevins**, a former peace officer and National Park Ranger on Alcatraz. John has been responsible for organizing the Living History Days twice a year on the island, a considerable feat considering the logistics of getting 50 - 60 people together from all over the Bay Area and getting them on the boat on time and setting up the daily program. John also brings considerable knowledge of the fort's military and architectural history which he gladly shares with his fellow members and with the public.



John Nevins holding his FOCWA award. He too received a flag that has flown over Alcatraz and a “Hurrah” from the crowd.



As part of the ceremony, FOCWA member Constance Smith read a poem about “Comrades in Arms” - a typical 1860’s custom during a memorial service or awards ceremony. Constance spent the day talking to visitors about women’s roles during the Civil War. In the background is member Gary Hormel, who frequently comes to the island dressed as Captain Stewart, the first commanding officer of Fort Alcatraz. His programs bring the human side to life as a soldier/officer on the island.



Ranger John couldn't help but join the 3rd Artillery Band in playing the cymbals as they played the tune "Gary Owen" on the dock for visitors. He may have a new career ahead of him.



From the 1860's to the 1960's: Civil War re-enactors pose with a Parks Conservancy guide who dresses as a USBP correctional officer when he gives his tours. Photo credit: Stephen Covey

Photos thanks to Nikki Rotheneder and NPS Volunteer Tim Brazil. Video of flag ceremony can be seen at: https://youtu.be/cULMz_Mp0tc

More photos can be seen on the "Activities" page on the FOCWA website
San Francisco Roundtable: <http://www.sfewrt.com>

Peninsula Roundtable: <http://www.peninsulacivilwarroundtable.org>