

NEWSLETTER

Friends of Civil War Alcatraz

May 2017

Editor: Steve Johnson

The Other California Forts Fort Alcatraz and Fort Point were certainly the state's most important forts during the Civil War. They were where the majority of the state's population was located at the time, and protected the state's largest and most important city, San Francisco. They guarded the entrance to San Francisco Bay, watched over ship traffic, protected the approach to Mare Island Naval Base and the armory at Benicia, and provided troops when needed.

However, they weren't the only forts in California, and what follows is a description of some other important forts in the state that were occupied by Union troops during the Civil War. If you are traveling through the state this summer, you may wish to stop at some of these historic forts.

Fort Crook, Shasta County, 1857-1869. Established on the Fall River to watch over Native Americans. Manned by 4th US Infantry. A marker notes the site of the fort but there is a Fort Crook Museum in the town of Fall River Mills. <http://www.fortcrook.com/visitor.htm>

Fort Humboldt, Humboldt County, 1853 - 1856. Built on a bluff overlooking Humboldt Bay in present-day Eureka, the fort housed the 4th U.S. Infantry which provided protection for settlers and miners from hostile tribes. Ulysses S. Grant was stationed here in 1854 and the boredom and isolation drove him to drink; he eventually resigned his commission and returned to his family in the east.

Today the remnants of the fort are maintained by the state of California as a state historic park. Of the fort's original fourteen buildings, only the hospital remains. The surgeon's quarters were re-constructed in the 1980's and a historic garden was planted. To the right is the interior of the surgeon's quarters.

Information on the park's operating hours and features can be found at https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=665

photo courtesy California State Parks



Dates to Remember
Tuesday, May 16, 2017
Peninsula Civil War
Roundtable Lecture:
"John Paul Jones, An
American Hero" 11:30 am

Thursday, May 18, 2017
San Francisco Civil War
Roundtable Lecture:
"Bonds of Union" 6:45 pm
dinner, 7:45 lecture

Monday, May 29
Memorial Day

Fort Tejon, Kern County, 1854 -1864. Located on the vital stagecoach road in the mountain pass between southern California and the Great Central Valley, Fort Tejon was established to protect the

local friendly tribes and settlers from attacks by more hostile tribes. The fort was the western terminus of the Camel Corps, which operated from 1857 - 1861, and was a station for the Butterfield stagecoach line. First occupied by the First U.S. Dragoons, it was later manned by the 2nd California Cavalry. Today it is a state park and a pleasant rest stop along the Grapevine.



Several original buildings have been restored, with two being open to visitors. The barracks show a re-created troopers' quarters, and the officers' quarters have furnished rooms of the period.

Like Alcatraz and Fort Point, Fort Tejon has an active historical association that sponsors Dragoon and Civil War re-enactments, held every month. For information, see their page: <http://www.forttejon.org/events.html>

For information on Fort Tejon State Park, go to http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=585

photos courtesy California State Parks

Benicia Barracks, Solano County, 1849 - 1963. The Post near Benicia became the headquarters of the Department of the Pacific from 1851 - 1857 and the home of the 2nd U.S. Infantry in the West. It became the embarkation center for troops garrisoned in Western forts. During the Civil War it housed California Volunteers. There were eight barracks, married officers' houses, bachelor officers' quarters, a commissary, hospital, stables, and parade ground. It remained a military installation for much of the 20th century. Today the property is now owned by a corporation, but the history of the barracks and arsenal can be found at the Benicia Museum, which also gives tours of the area. For information, go to <http://beniciahistoricalmuseum.org>

Drum Barracks, Los Angeles County, 1862 - 1873. Originally on 60 acres, which was donated to the government by wealthy businessmen to make sure Southern California had a strong Union presence, the fort later became known as Drum Barracks. It functioned mainly to protect the supply depot at Wilmington harbor and to put down any rebellion by the many pro-Confederate groups in Southern California. It was the military headquarters of Southern California and the Arizona Territory. Today only one of the 19 original wooden buildings remain, and it houses a Civil War Museum run by L.A. County. The museum has the third largest Civil War library in the state, and it hosts a monthly book club.



Drum Barracks, located in the city of Wilmington, Los Angeles County.

Notes from the island:

1. Brad Schall has initiated a project to make sure we have FOCWA representation every Sunday on Alcatraz. This can include doing cannon demonstrations, giving programs, or just giving short talks in the sally port. Remember that we have Union uniforms in the ranger's office, various sizes, as well as period shoes. If you are interested in participating, please email Brad.
2. The rangers have asked that we avoid going through the theater on the way to the ranger office; please go via China Alley.
3. Volunteers have been asked to record any visitor interactions during the day in the log book in the ranger's office

Resources: fortwiki.com and militarymuseum.org

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

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