



NEWSLETTER

Friends of Civil War Alca-



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Island News

The temporary-but-permanent-looking bookstore should be opening this month. Two books I would recommend you purchase there are: *Alcatraz - A Definitive History of the Penitentiary Years* by Michael Esslinger, which details life in the cellhouse and each of the escapes; and *Breaking the Rock* by Jolene Babyak. Jolene lived on the island as a child (her father was the assistant warden) and is a fine writer and historian. Her book gives the real story of the famous 1962 escape, which all volunteers on the island should know about. Jolene has been coming to the island on two Saturdays a month during the summer and sometimes gives a tour, which is highly recommended.

Dates to Remember

Saturday, August 2
Living History Day
at Fort Point
10 am - 4 pm

Fort Point Living History Day

We are already in the process of helping to organize the next Living History Day at Fort Point on August 2nd. Besides the 20th Maine re-enactors, we are having members of FOCWA and the Sons of Union Veterans attend. We will have the usual exhibits of medicines, weapons, and soldiers' equipment on display, and tours of the fort and its history will be scheduled. If you are a Civil War re-enactor or FOCWA member and wish to participate, please contact the editor.

Celebrating the Fourth of July, 1862

In the second year of the Civil War, San Franciscans celebrated by hanging an estimated 36,000 flags throughout the city. Many went to see the parade that started at Washington Park, headed south to Mission Street, making a loop and returning via Montgomery Street.¹ Marching in the parade were infantry, cavalry, and artillery soldiers (no doubt from Fort Point and Fort Alcatraz). Leading them was Brigadier General George Wright, commander of the Department of the Pacific. They were followed by fire engine companies, school children, Irish and Italian societies, and a large contingent of the city's butchers.



Soldiers assemble in Washington Square Park

¹ "San Francisco celebrates the 4th in 1862" <https://www.sanfranciscostory.com>

A large replica of the ironclad *Monitor* was wheeled along the route, to the delight of all.

In Washington D.C., the 4th of July in 1862 saw the city festooned with flags on buildings, houses, and in the many army camps surrounding the capital. Many of the troops stationed in the city marched in a parade and opened their camps to civilian visitors. Patriotic speeches were given in many venues, and churches offered prayers for an end to the war. President Lincoln met with his cabinet in the morning to discuss a request to Congress for 40,000 more troops. Later that day, he spent time riding with a train of ambulances carrying wounded soldiers from the Peninsular Campaign to a makeshift hospital at the Soldiers Home.²

The capital at the time was dealing with overcrowding, due to the number of troops but also because of the hundreds of slaves in the District who had been freed in April under the Compensated Emancipation Act. A measles epidemic broke out and isolation camps were set up to isolate the sick. What's more, the city's water system had been contaminated and typhus was spreading (the probable cause of the death of Willie, the President's son).

Despite these problems, as well as the bad news from the front lines, the citizens of the nation's capital renewed their hope that the founding fathers' hope for a united country would again be realized.

The Flag on July 4th, 1862



The flag flown on the Fourth of July 1862 had 34 stars; the joining of Kansas to the Union in January 1861 had added another star. This flag was used until 1863 when West Virginia entered the Union and became the 35th state. President Lincoln refused to remove the stars of the Southern states, stating the states could not withdraw from the

Union and therefore their stars could not be removed. Also, removing

these stars would symbolize the permanent withdrawal of those states.

Today, whenever possible, the 34-star flag is flown at Fort Point on Living History Days, to make the occasion more authentic.

Cannon and Carriage Painted

Thanks to FOCWA charter member Phil Blake, who brought a crew all the way from Modesto to help, the cannon and carriage on the island got a new coat of paint. Former ranger John Cantwell was there to help as well, and provided this photo.

The cannon had to be cleaned thoroughly before paint could be applied, and the paint should last a couple of years before it needs to be re-done. Thanks to their efforts, the cannon looks brand new.



² <https://www.essentialcivilwarcurriculum.com/washington-capital-of-the-union.html>