



NEWSLETTER

Friends of Civil War Alcatraz



September 2025

Steve Johnson, Editor

In this issue: The Other Plot to Steal Gold - the Salvador Affair

Island News

Recently the number of visitors to Alcatraz in one week was over 40,000. Fortunately the island has 9 permanent and 3 seasonal rangers to handle the crowds, plus a number of dedicated volunteers to help with programs and answer questions of the visitors. The new bookstore should finally be open later this month so that restoration work can continue at the north end of the cell block, closing the bookstore there.

The fallen smokestack has been removed on the north side of the cell house and the tunnel in Building 64 is open again. Ranger Garcia was given a proposal for interpretive panels in the sallyport which gives the history of Fort Alcatraz. The proposed narrative was written by member Steve Johnson some years ago when a room in China Alley was suggested as a "Civil War Room". Now it appears that the sally port would be a good and proper place for these panels, since it is one of the few remaining structures of the old fort.

Dates to Remember

Saturday, October 4
Living History Day
on Alcatraz
8 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Crowds leaving Alcatraz on a recent Saturday

Living History Day on October 4th

Plans are being made for the second Living History Day of the year on Alcatraz. We will have the usual exhibits of soldiers' equipment, medical displays, and tours of the fort and the citadel. The Third Artillery Band will not be in attendance this time, but the Fort Point Brass Band has been invited to play. All Civil War reenactors are invited to participate; please send an email to the editor if you plan to come.

Living History Day at Fort Point on August 2nd

The Living History Day at Fort Point was overcast, with low temperatures and cold wind throughout the day. This may have accounted for lower attendance than usual. Still, we had a fair number of visitors who either came because they knew about the event or just happened to be visiting that day. We were fortunate to have the 20th Maine reenactors, the U.S. Balloon Corps, the Wandering Bow String Band, the Fort Point Garrison Band, the regimental paymaster

and the Sanitary Commission, and FOCWA members and Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War all in attendance. We received many compliments of the public who braved the cold to be there. FOCWA members in attendance were Gary Hormel, Frank Avila, Constance Smith, Stephanie Delich, Michelle Atno-Hall, Ken Felton, Glenn Martin, and Steve Johnson



The Passing of Brad Schall, Co-founder of the Friends of Civil War Alcatraz

We were all saddened at the passing of Brad Schall, one of the founders of the Friends of Civil War Alcatraz. Brad, who had 5 ancestors who fought in the Union Army during the Civil War, was keenly interested in military history and wanted to make sure the military history of Alcatraz was told to visitors. He, along with Fred Bolmfalk, founded the Friends of Civil War Alcatraz in 2005. His friendliness, integrity, and patriotism were an inspiration to us all. We are keeping his mission alive by giving programs about the Civil War history of Alcatraz and holding Living History Days on the island.



If you wish to donate to FOCWA in support of Brad's vision to keep Civil War history alive on Alcatraz, please go to <http://www.friendsofcivilwaralcatraz.org/donations.htm> Thank you.

The Other Plot to Steal Gold - The *Salvador* Affair

Thomas Egenton Hogg was a Confederate sympathizer from Baltimore who was quite a schemer and adventurer. With the approval of the Confederate government, Hogg and five Irish companions in 1863 boarded the American schooner *Joseph L. Garrity* in Matamoros, Mexico, which was bound for New York. While at sea they took over the ship and made their way to British Honduras, after despoiting the crew along the Yucatan coast. They renamed the ship the *Eureka*, and while at the British port they sold the ship's cotton. They then escaped by stealing a small boat, ending up in Honduras. There they bribed their way out of the country and canoed to Nicaragua and then to Guatemala, where they booked passage on a British steamer to the Bahamas. Hogg and his crew made around \$20,000 from this adventure¹, but Hogg wasn't done with his plans for supporting the Confederacy. He joined the Confederate Navy in 1864 as a master's mate. He suggested to his superiors a plan to take over a U.S. ship in the Pacific and use it to attack whalers and ships transporting gold. He was told to "strike a blow at California", and employed the assistance of Edward Swain, a mid-shipman in the Confederate Navy.



That spring the two boarded the *Tristram Shandy*, a British-built schooner used for running the blockade, on their way to Wilmington, North Carolina, and planned to catch another ship to Nassau. However, the ship was intercepted by the *USS Kansas*, and the men were taken to prison in New York. There Swain used his British passport and Hogg used a bribe to get released. They made their way to Canada, and caught a ship to Havana. In that town they assembled a crew of 15 and bought guns, ammunition, and handcuffs. They then sailed to Panama and planned to board and take over the steamer *Guatemala*.

They arrived too late to catch that ship, and waited for the arrival of the steamship *Salvador*, which they boarded under assumed names. What they didn't know was that the American consul in Havana had found out about this scheme and notified Rear Admiral George Pearson in Panama City. He in turn notified the captain of the *USS Lancaster*, whose crew boarded the *Salvador* and found the weapons and handcuffs in the luggage of the Confederates. They were promptly arrested and brought to Alcatraz.

Unlike the crew of the *Chapman*, who had been tried by a civilian court the previous year for a similar attempt to seize a ship, Hogg and his associates were tried by a military commission and sentenced to be hanged. General Irvin McDowell later commuted their sentence - life in prison at San Quentin for Hogg and 10 years for the others.² After the war, President Johnson ordered the release of the *Salvador* pirates. This was another reason why the army continued to fortify the Bay Area forts, because the fear of Confederate raiders entering the Bay was always in the mind of the military and the civilian populace of San Francisco, even into 1865.

¹ Jo Ann Gardner, "Hogg wild: The adventurous pirate from Cecil County" in *The Cecil Whig Newspaper*, Oct. 8, 2016

² Aurora Hunt, "The Pacific Squadron of 1861 - 1866" in <https://www.militarymuseum.org/Pac%20Sgdn.html>