

NEWSLETTER

Proposal Moves Ahead

On September 21 the Board of FOCWA met at Fort Point to hear about the progress of the design of the Civil War Room. Dave Vago, exhibit consultant, presented a visual display of how the room "Alcatraz - The Gibraltar of the Bay" - would look to visitors as they walk into the room. They would see large photos of cannons and soldiers on the facing wall, with newspaper clippings of the newspapers of the time on the left wall, along with an informational panel describing the beginnings of Alcatraz as a military fort, its construction, and armaments. In the corner on the left would be a mannequin of a soldier in an artillery uniform, and in the right corner would be cannonballs and a sponge rammer. The painting of Alcatraz by Jim Breeden would be on the right wall, along with an informational panel about the beginnings of Alcatraz as a prison during the Civil War years. Another panel on the wall to the right of the door would describe the transition from an Army fort to the U.S. Military Prison on Alcatraz, the building of the cell block and lighthouse, the gardens, and how the prison was run. There was some discussion as to the size and placement of a model of Fort Alcatraz built by a designer some time ago; it was agreed to have a committee view the model to see about its appropriateness for the room. Members who would like a copy of the proposal please send an e-mail to Steve Johnson via sfwalkingtours@gmail.com Your comments and suggestions for the proposal are welcomed.

Dates to Remember
October 10 - 12 Fleet Week
October 11 - Living History Day on Alcatraz



South Battery, 1864. One of the proposed photos to use in the Civil War Room on Alcatraz.



Faces of imprisoned people from around the world, done in Legos, laid out in the New Industries Bldg. Photo courtesy of dailymail.co.uk

Wei Wei Exhibit Opens

Chinese artist Ai Wei Wei is well known for his art and his activism. His art - which includes photography, sculpture, architecture, and film has been exhibited in Europe and Asia. Because of his activism he has been imprisoned by the Chinese government for a time. Alcatraz was chosen as the perfect place to exhibit some of his work, since it has been a place of detention in the past for people of conscience. I

Hopi Elders were detained on the island in the 1870's for refusing to let their children go to boarding schools far away from their reservation lands. In World War I there was no general exemption for conscientious objectors to military service, so Alcatraz was where some of them were sent - most notably four Hutterite men, who were badly mistreated. (for more info, see <http://www.parksconservancy.org/assets/about/pdfs/prisoners-of-conscience.pdf>)

The Wei Wei Exhibit is located in various parts of the island, including the cell house infirmary, dining hall, and the New Industries Building. In the dining hall, visitors can fill out postcards with a message of support which will be sent to a prisoner of conscience. Tickets to the exhibit can be purchased from www.alcatrazcruises.com. Members of FOCWA can make arrangements to see the exhibit by contacting Ranger Lori Brosnan.

Conscientious Objectors in The Civil War

Members of pacifist religious groups in the North (Quakers, Mennonites) were usually exempted individually from military duty; some of them were willing to work in hospitals or as ambulance drivers. The Draft Act of 1863 made a provision for "conscientious objectors" but did not define the term. Secretary of War Stanton finally ordered those with religious convictions to simply not be called to service. In the South, at first things were worse for conscientious objectors - they could be shot or imprisoned. But in 1862 the Exemption Act was passed allowing them to do non-combatant duty or pay a \$500 exemption tax. See

<http://www.civilwarhome.com/conscientiousobjectors.html>

Living History Day October 11

FOCWA will be sponsoring Living History Day on Saturday, October 11th. Re-enactors will be coming from miles around to give visitors a sense of what Alcatraz looked like as a military fort during the Civil War. Interestingly, this weekend is also Fleet Week in San Francisco, so visitors will see both the old and the new while visiting the island. Re-enactors and members of FOCWA have been invited to spend the night on the island, which is a rare and special occasion. For more detailed information, go to the following: http://www.friendsofcivilwaralcatraz.org/Alcatraz_Events.htm

