

# NEWSLETTER

## Friends of Civil War Alcatraz

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**Alcatraz Cannon Finally Drilled** After many long years of waiting, the howitzer cannon in the west guard room finally has an unplugged vent hole, thanks to the efforts of Ranger John Cantwell and Marcus Koenen. A pair of experts were brought in with a special drill to unplug the vent hole which had been closed up, first by a hard material and then later by a drill bit that had broken off. Kevin Riley, of Riley Conservation Company, and Kevin Harvey, a machinist and tooling consultant, fabricated a custom drilling rig at the company's Oakland facility and brought it to the island. Once it was securely placed on the cannon, for the next several hours they patiently drilled away the metals in the hole. Care was taken not to injure the top or the inside of the cannon. They had correctly estimated the angle of the hole, using diagrams



FOCWA member and NPS volunteer Gary Hormel assists Kevin Harvey (middle) and Kevin Riley (r)

Kevin Riley using a carbon drill and compressed air to clear the fuse hole.

### Dates to Remember

**Saturday, January 17, 2016**  
FOCWA General Meeting  
10 am on Alcatraz

**Saturday, September 30th**  
Fort Point Living History Day

of the same model of cannon provided by Ranger Cantwell. For anyone interested in the details of the whole process, you can obtain a pdf available from Brad Schall, whose e-mail can be found on this website. The significance of having the fuse hole open is that we can proceed with cannon drills for the public by showing how the friction primer was placed into the fuse hole and was set off by pulling on



a lanyard, which caused the striking pin to spark and ignite the powder. Visitors are quite fascinated in seeing - and sometimes participating in - the process of loading and firing a Civil War cannon. Of course we never fire the cannon off, but visitors certainly get the sense of how artillery soldiers had to be totally in sync with one another to load and fire a cannon, typically every 30 - 40 seconds. For FOCWA members who would like to learn how to do cannon drills with the public, please contact Chuck Gardali or Steve Johnson, whose e-mail is found on this website.



FOCWA member Robert Mayer showed visitors how the howitzer was used to defend Fort Alcatraz. He was assisted by members of the California Historical Artillery Society.

### **Living History Day on Alcatraz Brings Huge Crowds to the Island**

Well, we would like to think that the hundreds of people who came to Alcatraz on Saturday the 26th were coming because it was Civil War Day on Alcatraz. In reality they were all coming to see the old prison, but no doubt were surprised to see Union soldiers all over the island. Many visitors stopped to hear about medicines of the 1860's, or joined in a cannon drill, or took a tour of Fort Alcatraz; a lucky few got to take an underground tour of the citadel, thanks to FOCWA guides. They also enjoyed the sounds of the Civil War, thanks to the brass band members that came from many parts of northern California just to spend the day playing on the island. By the end of the day we had achieved our goal - to let people know that Alcatraz is a National Park because of its importance as Civil War fort and later as a military prison.



### **The California Volunteer Infantry Band Becomes the 3rd U.S. Artillery Band**

The musicians who came to play on Alcatraz have been known for years as the California Volunteer Band. Seen here on the left preparing to play, they specialize in music of the Civil War era played on period brass instruments. The band has agreed to call themselves the U.S. Third Artillery Band when on Alcatraz.