

NEWSLETTER

Friends of Civil War Alcatraz

October 2023

Steve Johnson, Editor

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Island News (from the editor)

The number of visitors coming to the island is still high, with all the morning boats full and the afternoon boats fairly full. On the island on Friday I gave 4 walking tours, with about 50 visitors in each group, so the demand is strong. As of this writing Congress has extended the time to reach a resolution about funding the government; funding has been extended for 45 days. This means the parks remain open during that time and we can go ahead with the Living History Day on October 21. Fleet week starts the first week of October and the island will be crowded with folks who want to see the air show. Any member who wants to begin training as a volunteer and watch the air show on Sunday Oct. 8th should contact the editor right away.

Dates to Remember
Saturday, October 7
Board Meeting, 10 am

Monday, October 9
Indigenous People Day
on Alcatraz

Saturday, October 21
Living History Day
Alcatraz
8 am - 4pm

Board Meeting Re-scheduled

The board meeting scheduled for September 29 was cancelled due to a problem with the email server. Board members please plan to attend the next scheduled board meeting on Saturday, October 7th, at 10 a.m.

Living History Day, October 21

We are pleased that the Third Artillery Brass Band will be returning to the island for our Living History Day on October 21. Constance Smith and Stephanie Delich will be presenting the household goods and medicines of the 1860s, while Randall Hawkinson will be showing visitors the equipment typically carried by the Civil War soldier. Ken Felton will greet visitors in the cannon room and explain how the island would defend itself if invaded. Gary Hormel, Steve Johnson, and Constance Smith will be giving tours of Fort Alcatraz and the Citadel. Any members who can help that day would be appreciated. Contact the editor for more information. Lunch will be provided and you don't have to stay the whole day.

Mischief and Bloodshed - Secessionists in California

Men who joined the volunteer regiments in California had hopes of going East to fight the Confederates, but soon realized that the Army was not going to pay to bring Californians to the east coast - they were needed in the West. Not only were settlers and stagecoaches being attacked by native tribes (who were naturally fighting to keep their land and food sources intact), but roving bands of secessionists were also attacking stagecoaches, as well as Union supporters. An example was the incident that happened on June 30th, 1864, when just north of Placerville the Pioneer Stage Company coach was stopped and robbed by 6 men. Gold bullion belonging to Wells Fargo & Co. was looted, and a note was left behind with the driver. It read "This is to certify that I have received from Wells Fargo a [sum of] cash for the purpose of outfitting recruits enlisted in

California for the Confederate States Army. Signed, R. Henry Ingram, Captain commanding Company, CSA.”¹ A posse was immediately formed to look for the robbers, and two of them were found the next day at Thirteen Mile House in Placer County. Deputy Sheriff Joseph Staples entered the bedroom and demanded that the men surrender. Instead there was a gunfight and the deputy was killed and Constable George Ranny was wounded. One of the robbers involved in the shooting was Thomas B. Poole, a former undersheriff of Monterey County, who had fled to Santa Clara.² A posse arrested him there and discovered a scheme to recruit Southern sympathizers in that county. Poole was returned to Placer County where he was found guilty and hanged on September 29, 1865. And what of Captain Ingram? He disappeared from the state and was never found.



A stagecoach pulled by mules in a New Mexico 1937 parade. Many stagecoaches were pulled by mules and the coaches were the lighter Celerity style, not the Concord coaches as seen in movies.

A well-known secessionist agitator during this time was Lovick P. Hall, a writer for the pro-Southern paper *Expositor* in Visalia. Most newspapers in California that were sympathetic to the South tread a fine line between free speech and advocating rebellion. Hall wrote that Lincoln and his cabinet “were the most tyrannical and corrupt crew that ever polluted the earth”, and the paper made up stories such as claiming that a firm in New York was paid to outfit 50,000 contrabands (freed slaves) with suits “while white men were neglected”.³

General Wright had had enough and banned pro-Southern newspapers from using the mails to deliver their papers. With this, anti-Union sentiment became stronger in Visalia, so much so that Camp Babbit was erected to house two companies of the 2nd California Volunteer Cavalry to watch over the town. Hall was arrested and took a loyalty oath and was released; soon after he was writing scurrilous attacks on Lincoln, abolitionists, and the Army. A pro-Union mob in March, 1863, ransacked the office of the *Expositor* and destroyed the press. Hall left Visalia and moved to Merced and wrote for the *Merced Banner* until it too was shut down by a mob. He then went to Jackson to write for the *Amador Dispatch* and - you guessed it - continued to write his invectives against the Union. He was then arrested and taken to Alcatraz in late 1864; he was not released until September of 1865.

Confederate sympathizers were a small but active minority in the state, doing whatever they could to undermine the government and disseminate anger and hate through newspapers. It was only because of federal troops like those trained on Alcatraz that they were kept in check during the Civil War.

“There is more involved in this contest than is realized by every one. There is involved in this struggle the question whether your children and my children shall enjoy the privileges we have enjoyed.” A. Lincoln, 1864

¹ “The Confederate Minority in California” by Benjamin Gilbert, in the *California Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 20, #2 June, 1941 pg. 158

² “The Stagecoach in Northern California: Rough Rides, Gold Camps & Daring Drivers” by Cheryl Ann Stapp

³ Gilbert, op. cit., p.165