

# NEWSLETTER

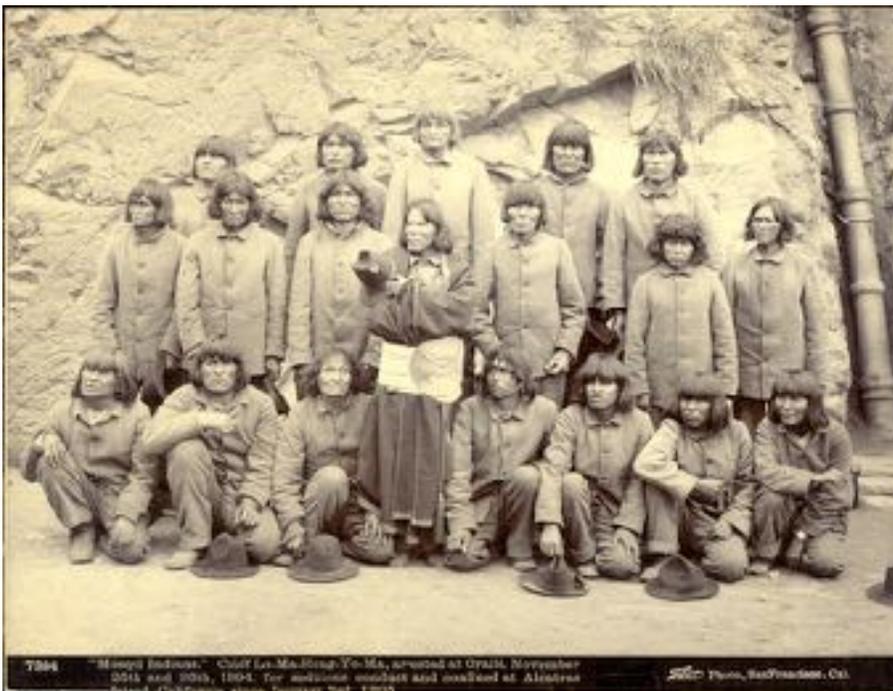
## Friends of Civil War Alcatraz

November 2019

Steve Johnson, Editor

### Alcatraz and Native Americans

As we are coming up on the 50th anniversary of the Indian\* occupation on Alcatraz, it would be appropriate to review the connection between the Native Americans and the island we know as Alcatraz. For thousands of years the Ohlone tribes living by the Bay knew the island as a place of isolation, a place to gather birds' eggs and shellfish, perhaps to be sent there as a test of endurance, or as a punishment, or as a place to seek dreams, but not a place to live. The first recorded Indian to stay on Alcatraz in the 19th century was a prisoner of the Army, named "Paiute Tom", in 1873. He had been transferred from Camp Mc Dermitt in Nevada for reasons unknown, and was shot by a guard two days later — possibly trying to escape. During the Modoc war that same year, two Indian fighters were brought to Alcatraz with life sentences. One died of disease and was buried on Angel Island; the other lived on the island until 1878 when he was transferred to Leavenworth. In the 1880's a number of Apaches were sent to Alcatraz, including Indian scouts who had mutinied against the Army because of their mistreatment. Probably the most well-known Indian prisoners were the nineteen Hopi elders who were arrested in their Arizona homeland by the Army for resisting efforts to send their children to the white man's far-off boarding school. They knew their children would be humiliated, beaten for speaking their language, and lose their cultural ties to family and clan. These Hopi "ringleaders" were brought to the island in 1895 and were there for 8 months.



### Dates to Remember

#### November 8-10

West Coast Civil War  
Conference in Sacramento

#### Nov. 20 - 23, 2019

Indians of All Tribes Day, marking  
the 50th anniversary of the  
Indian Occupation — all day

#### Thursday, December 5, 2019

SF Civil War Roundtable talk  
"The Wit & Wisdom of Abraham  
Lincoln" 6 pm, Gold Mirror  
Restaurant, 800 Taraval St., S.F.

Besides being forced to do manual labor, they were taken to nearby schools to see the advantages of having a "civilized, Christian education". When they were finally released and returned to Arizona, they told the Indian agent there that the military had promised them that their children would not be sent away to boarding school. The agent, however, said no such agreement had been made, and children were forcibly removed and taken

away to boarding schools 40 miles away from their village. Nevertheless, the Hopi engaged in passive resistance whenever they could. Incidents like this, thousands of them, were the antecedents leading to the American Indian movement of the 1960's, when Indians of all tribes began to speak out forcibly against the injustices to their people. The Indians on Alcatraz in 1969 were not prisoners this time; they were a free people voicing their frustrations as well as their hopes for a better destiny for all their people around the country.

### **Native American Occupation Events on Alcatraz**

Wednesday, November 20 - Veteran Indian occupiers will have a reunion in the New Industries building in the morning. Starting at 1 pm there will be talks about the occupation. All invited.

Thursday, November 21 - Talks during the day in the NIB regarding the occupation.

Saturday, November 23 - New exhibit opens: *Red Power on Alcatraz* with speakers, exhibitors, and a performance

Volunteers needed all three days. Please email or call Ranger Wendy.

\* “Indian” or “Native American”? For an interesting reflection on these terms, read this article by Dennis Zotigh of the Kiowa tribe and interpreter at the Museum of the American Indian <https://blog.nmai.si.edu/main/2011/01/introduction-1st-question-american-indian-or-native-american.html>

### **Resources**

“Hopi Prisoners on the Rock” by Wendy Holiday, Historian, Hopi Cultural Preservation Office, 1995 National Park Service <https://www.nps.gov/alca/learn/historyculture/hopi-prisoners-on-the-rock.htm>

“The Army and American Indian Prisoners”, National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/alca/learn/historyculture/the-army-and-american-indian-prisoners.htm>

“The Limits of Schooling By Imposition: The Hopi Indians of Arizona” by Donald Eugene Miller, 1987, University of Tennessee [http://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5628&context=utk\\_graddiss](http://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5628&context=utk_graddiss)

The San Francisco Civil War Roundtable Facebook page  
<https://www.facebook.com/SanFranciscoCivilWarRoundTable/>

The Peninsula Civil War Roundtable  
<http://www.peninsulacivilwarroundtable.org>

West Coast Civil War Conference flyer <http://www.peninsulacivilwarroundtable.org/penwp/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/West-Coast-Conference-Flyer-2019.pdf>

**Note: There will be no December newsletter**