



THE ALCATRAZ SENTINEL
The Newsletter of Historic Civil War Alcatraz Island
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The Friends of Civil War Alcatraz was organized to operate exclusively for charitable and educational purposes, including but not limited to:

1. To provide support to the National Park Service on Alcatraz Island, California.
2. Assist the National Park Service on Alcatraz Island on educating the general public on the Civil War Experience (Civil War 1861-1865) on Alcatraz Island and Northern California.
3. Support the National Park Service on Alcatraz Island with living history programs.
4. Cooperate with the National Park Service on Alcatraz Island in accomplishing educational, interpretive, conservation, research, planning, and park improvement projects.

Mission Statement:

Working in partnership with the National Park Service to enhance preservation and understanding of the heritage and lasting significance of Fortress Alcatraz.

Condensed History of Alcatraz Island:

Military History 1850-1934 (Fortress Alcatraz)

The first Spaniard to discover the island was Juan Manuel de Ayala in 1775, who named the island “La Isla de los Alcatrazes” which translates as “The Island of the Pelicans”. Following the acquisition of California in 1848 the U.S. Army began studying the suitability of Alcatraz Island for the positioning of coastal batteries to protect the approaches to San Francisco Bay. When the American Civil War broke out in 1861 the island mounted 85 cannon in casemates around its perimeter. Alcatraz never fired its guns in anger, though during the war it was used to imprison Confederate sympathizers on the west coast. In 1907, Alcatraz was officially designated as the Western U.S. Military Prison until 1934 when it was acquired by the Department of Justice and became a federal prison.

Penitentiary Years 1934-1963 (the Rock)

During its 29 years of operation, the penitentiary claimed, no prisoners as having ever successfully escaped. The penitentiary was closed in 1963.

Native American Occupation 1969-1971

In 1969 Native Americans occupied the island, according to the occupants, the Treaty of Fort Laramie (1866) returned all abandoned or out-of- use federal land to the native people from whom it was acquired.

National Park 1971-Present

The entire Alcatraz Island was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976 and today, the island is an historic site operated by the National Park Service as part Golden Gate National Recreation Area.



Fortress Alcatraz Island with San Francisco in the back ground circa 1920

The Friends of Civil War Alcatraz Support Living History Days on Alcatraz

With two very exciting and successful Living History Days held on Alcatraz in 1908, the Friends of Civil War Alcatraz are looking forward with two dates for hosting Living History Days in 2009. Event Coordinator John Nevins announced that 2009 dates are April 4 and September 26. Along with uniformed re-enactors giving demonstrations, walking guard duty, answering questions from the public, and posing for photographs, the public had the opportunity to witness first hand how life in the army serving on Alcatraz Island was during the Civil War. To many of the visitors this was a first time experience, seeing men in full union blue uniforms guarding Confederate sympathizer prisoners and manning their posts guarding the approach to the Golden Gate against an invasion by sea, thus protecting the vital gold fields of California.

Union Soldier Standing Guard duty



During a living history day on Alcatraz Island

2010 West Coast Civil War Conference

The Friends of Civil War Alcatraz along with The San Francisco Civil War Round Table will co-host the Annual West Coast Civil War Conference in 2010. This event will bring top speakers from across the country to the Bay Area for three days to present an exciting and informative program on the civil war era in San Francisco Bay. The three days will include talks, tours of fortress Alcatraz and other bay fortifications, as well as other events. This is an event not to be missed by all Civil War enthusiasts and the general public.

The date for the conference is set for November 12-14, 2010. The keynote speaker will be the renowned Civil War author, historian, and speaker James McPherson. His book *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* has sold six hundred thousand copies. I am sure if you bring a copy to the conference Mr. McPherson will be glad to sign it. More information to follow in future issues of the news letter.

With each edition of the Alcatraz Sentinel news letter there will be a short bio of a "FOCWA" officer or member. The First is one of the two co-chairs, Donald "Brad" Schall:

"My Civil War interest goes back to childhood where I lived one block from the Lincoln Civil War Memorial in Hutchinson, Kansas. As a child, our family participated in Memorial Day services with descendants of members of the Joseph Hooker GAR Post 7, of which my great-grandfather had been a member. We decorated the graves of my great-grandfather and other Civil War soldiers at East Side Cemetery in Hutchinson with flags and flowers.

I had 22 relatives who fought for the Union in the Civil War. Two of which were great-grandfathers, sergeant William Braden Schall was in the 11th Illinois Vol. Cavalry and Willis Reed who was a sergeant in the First Illinois Light Artillery. In addition three of William Braden Schall's brothers fought in the Civil War and each were wounded or killed in the defense of the Constitution. The Schall family came to the United States in 1730.

My Civil War interests and memberships are:

1. National Officer, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Council of Administration and National Chief of Staff.
2. Vice Chairman, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War Charitable Foundation
3. Co-Chairman and founding board member of Friends of Civil War Alcatraz
 - a. National Park Service Volunteer at Alcatraz
4. Past Commander of the Department of California and the Pacific, SUVCW
5. Member of Sons of Union Veterans of Civil War Camps #24, General Alfred Pleasonton.
6. Commanding officer, Company B, 8th California SVR.
7. Member of the Sacramento and San Francisco CWRT.

I belong to the California Historical Society, Kansas State Historical Society, Ft. Larnard Old Guard, First Corp. of Gettysburg, Gettysburg Battlefield Association and the Boy Scouts of America, National Eagle Scout Association and Commanding officer the Lincoln Hills Veterans Group (U.S. Army veteran).

However I am most proud of my wife Patti, our 5 children and 12 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild."