

THE ALCATRAZ SENTINEL
The Newsletter of Historic Civil War Alcatraz Island
Published by the Friends of Civil War Alcatraz

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Alcatraz has 150th Anniversary Ceremony honoring the military presence on the Island

The Friends of Civil War Alcatraz took part in assisting the National Park Service in this event to honor the many sacrifices of Army personnel and families to the history of this nation. It was a special day on Alcatraz for the many visitors as well as all participants. The FOCWA voted to award a special certificate to National Park Ranger Jayeson Vance for all his efforts in coordinating this event. Following is the official N.P.S. Report. Authored by Jayeson Vance N.P.S. Ranger.

**De-Briefing Report
150th Anniversary of the Post at Alcatraz Island
December 30, 2009**

Where: Alcatraz Island Dock

When: Wednesday December 30, 2009 0900 -1300 hrs

Who: U.S. Army Personnel : Elements of the 63rd RSC Command Group, 1SG Barlow 191st Army Band "Band of the Wild West," Eldon P. Regua, Major General, Commanding General 75th Battle Command Training Division, Armed Forces Reserve Center Houston Texas. Brigade Command Sergeant Major Roy A. Wells 91st "Wild West" Training Brigade Ft. Hunter Liggett, California. Thomas Christianson CIV 63rd RSC Historian. MSG Stanley Kamiya acted as point of contact for the Army and coordinated their end of the event.

National Park Service Personnel: Craig Kenkle Acting Deputy Superintendent, Golden Gate NRA, Amy Brees Supervisory Park Ranger. Jayeson Vance, Owen Simcoe, David MacDonald, Lori Brosnan, Craig Glassner, Volunteers in Parks: Bob Hubbs, Brad Schall, Sean Dempsey, John A. Martini, John Nevins, Friends of Civil War Alcatraz members. Jayeson Vance acted as point of contact for the National Park Service and was overall event coordinator.

What: Twenty one gun rifle salute in 3 volleys with M-16s, Color Guard with replica original 3rd Artillery Regimental flag included. Bagpiper played “*Garry Owen*,” bugler “*Ruffles and Flourishes*” , *National Anthem* and remarks by Major General Regua and Deputy Superintendent Kenkle, followed by “*Taps*.”

There followed a special behind the scenes program lead by John A. Martini and an additional program by Ranger Vance.

In December of 1859, the first Post Return was written for the “Post on Alcatraz Island.” One hundred and fifty years later, the original garrison was officially and formally remembered on Wednesday December 30, 2009.

Living History Day

Each and every living history day on Alcatraz gets better and better. The October 31, 2009 was no exception. Visitors to Alcatraz are always surprised to see Union soldiers manning their posts and guarding Confederate prisoners on Alcatraz. As you know the effort it takes to put on such an event is tremendous. The next scheduled Living History Day is scheduled for May 1st, 2010. If you want to help, contact Fred or Brad. Besides having a great time, the photo opportunities are endless. We hope to see you there!

FOCWA Annual Election of Officers

The election of officers was held on October 31, 2009 as required by our Bylaws. Please see the list of officers on page one of the news letter. The list of both the Board of Directors and 2010 Officers are in the minutes of the annual meeting sent to all “Friends of Civil War Alcatraz” members.

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 titled “Blood on the Ramparts: Civil War Coastal Defenses”. November 12-13 & 14, 2010. Due to the economy the conference format is changed from past conferences to make it affordable to attendees. There will be a Friday evening dinner with the speakers, a full day of presentations on Saturday and a bus tour on Sunday that includes a tour of Alcatraz and other bay area fortifications. Attendees will have the option to choose any combination of the three. This will be an event not to be missed by all Civil War enthusiasts and the general public. The key note speaker will be the renowned Civil War author and speaker James McPherson. His book: *Battle Cry of Freedom* 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. For more information go to the FOCWA web site.

If you have any thing that you want to be included in the Alcatraz Sentinel The news letter of The “Friends of Civil War Alcatraz” please submit it for publication. All articles, photos, or things of interest to our group are welcome.

The following article on Sea Coast Defense is intended to help increase your knowledge of Alcatraz and its roll in the defense of San Francisco Bay.

History of Sea Coast Defense in the United States:

Seacoast defense was a major concern for the United States from its independence until World War II. Before airplanes, America’s enemies could only reach her from the sea, making coastal forts an economical alternative to standing armies or a large navy. After the 1940’s it was recognized that fixed fortifications were obsolete and ineffective against aircraft and missiles. However, in prior eras foreign fleets were a realistic threat, and substantial fortifications were built at key locations, especially protecting major harbors.

Designs evolved and became obsolete with changes in the technology available to both the attacking forces and the defenders. The evolution of the US defense system is generally identified among several “systems”, which somewhat defined by the styles used, but more so by the events or trends which periodically stimulated new funding and construction.

At the beginning of the American Revolution many coastal fortifications already protected the Atlantic coast. Prior to independence from Britain, local communities or colonies bore the cost and responsibility for their protection. Urgency would wax and wane based on the political climate in Europe. Most defenses were artillery protected by earthworks, as protection from pirate raids and foreign incursions. Though seldom used, the forts were a deterrent.

First System

When the United States gained independence in 1783, the seacoast defense fortifications were in poor condition. Concerned by the outbreak of war in Europe in 1793, the congress created a committee to study coast defense needs, and appropriated money to construct a number of fortifications that would become known as the First System. Twenty-one locations were selected to be fortified, mostly with traditional low walled structures with low sloped earthworks protecting wood or brick walls. The conventional wisdom was that soft earth would cushion the effect of cannon fire against the walls, and that low walls presented less exposure to projectiles. Walls were laid out at angles to each other forming a system of bastions, resembling a star layout, so that enemy forces could not mass against the bottom of a wall beneath the vertical field of fire from the wall; defenders on any wall could see and fire-on the base of the adjacent walls. The angled walls also reduced the chance for more destructive straight-on hits from cannon balls. For the most part enthusiasm and funding waned and little work was completed. Most of the partially finished earthworks and wooden structures deteriorated before they were needed to defend against the British in 1812.

Second System

In 1807-1808 new concerns over a possible war with Great Britain, prompted President Thomas Jefferson to renew fortifications programs; this has come to be known as the Second System. One common weakness among the typical low wall-walled open bastion or star-forts was

exposure to enemy fire, especially to new devices designed to explode in mid air and rain shrapnel down on the gunners. Gun emplacements which were at an angle to the sea were vulnerable to a solid shot running parallel to the wall taking out a row of guns and gunners with one shot. A French engineer advocated a major change in the design of fortresses to address these problems. His design protected a fort's gunners by placing most of them in covered casemate walls with openings for the guns. By stacking rows of casemates in high walls more guns could be mounted with shorter walls. This was particularly important for seacoast fortifications which had only a limited time in which to fire at passing enemy ships. To build these tall forts, walls had to be built of masonry, but be very thick in order to withstand the pounding of cannon fire. The Second System was distinguished from the First System by greater use of the French concepts.

Again several fine forts were produced, but generally projects went unfinished, and between the First System and Second System little was prepared to resist the British in the coming War of 1812. However, no First or Second fortress was captured by the British. The invasions of Baltimore were prevented by Fort McHenry, but undefended Washington was burned. In some cases even incomplete forts were sufficient to deter attack from the sea.

Third System

In 1816, following the War of 1812, Congress appropriated over \$800,000 for an ambitious seacoast defensive system which was known as the Third System. A board of Engineers for Fortifications, appointed by President James Madison, visited potential sites and prepared plans for new forts. The Board's original 1821 report established the policy which would remain in place for most of the 19th century. The original report suggested 50 sites, but by 1850 the board had identified nearly 200 sites for fortification; however, forts were only actually built at 42 of these sites, with several additional sites containing towers or batteries.

The main defensive works were often large structures, based on a combining of the French concept, with many guns concentrated in tall thick masonry walls, and a concept with layers of low protected-masonry walls. Construction was generally overseen by officers of the army's Corps of Engineers. Smaller works guarded less significant harbors. Examples of large structures are Fort Sumter in South Carolina, Fort Pulaski in Georgia, and Fort Point in California.

Civil War

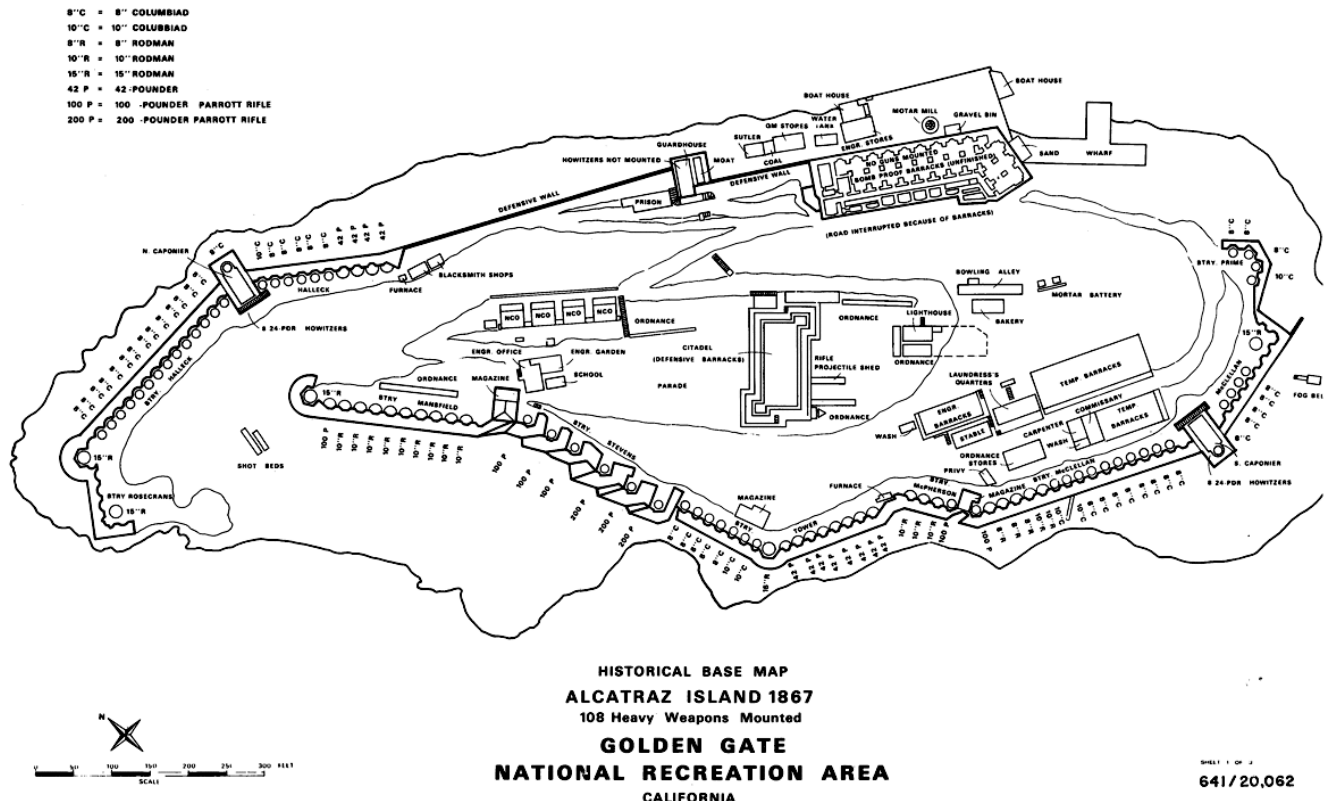
Again changes in technology affected design; the higher velocity ordnance of new rifled cannon crushed and penetrated the masonry walls of Third System forts. Severe damage was inflicted to forts on the Atlantic Coast during the Civil War. For example Fort Sumter was bombarded into surrender by Confederate batteries in 1861, and reduced to rubble during Union efforts towards its recapture. Latter in the war Fort Pulaski was forced to surrender after only 30 hours of bombardment with rifled cannon.

During the Civil War, naval officers learned that their steamships and ironclad vessels could run past southern Third System forts with acceptable losses. The urgencies of war required that new forts or improvements be constructed quickly and at low cost. Partially completed Third System forts were finished, but new construction was mostly wood-revetted earthworks. Frequently earthworks were built near a Third System fort in order to supplement its firepower, but often they were stand-alone fortifications. In some cases cannon from masonry forts were dispersed to

earthen bunkers where they were better protected. The fortification of San Francisco bay is a good example, where the typical Third System Fort Point at the mouth of the bay was effectively replaced by dispersed earthworks and low-walled fortifications nearby on Alcatraz Island, Angel Island, the Marin Headlands and Fort Mason. *For more information visit the web using key words like Sea coast defense in the United States.*

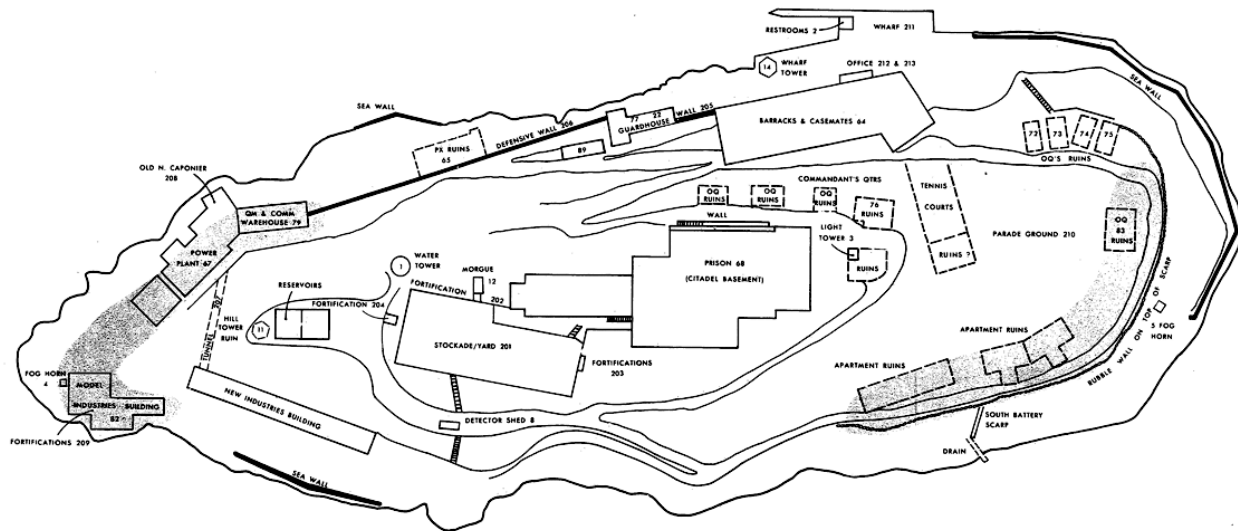
FOCWA - Newsletter Article #001 Submitted by Robert R. Hubbs

This is the first of a series of articles about existing structures that were constructed before and during the American Civil War on Alcatraz Island. Two maps will be included. Historical Base Map, Sheet 2, is a map with locations of batteries and gun placement at the close of the Civil War 1867. Included are the locations of other structures that supported the troops assigned to the island. The second map, labeled Alcatraz Island 1977, indicates the locations and possible locations of Civil War structures still in evidence in 1977. Also identified in the second map are those areas that should be considered for study and further investigation (Shaded Areas Recommended for Archeological Research). Both of these maps were compiled by Erwin N. Thompson and drawn by Ralph E. Wines for the Department of the Interior.



In 1849 a Coast Guard Survey determined sites for new lighthouses on the West Coast and Alcatraz Island was one of the first sites selected. The foundation for the lighthouse, referred to as the oldest on the West Coast, was laid in late 1852. That structure was a two-story California cottage with a tower in the center, construction began in early 1853. The fifty-foot tower was fitted with a fixed third-order lens and became operational in 1854. Later a flashing fourth-order lens was installed for safety reasons. The lighthouse signal was found to be obstructed by newly

constructed prison buildings and the tower replaced with an eighty-four foot stand alone structure that had been damaged in the 1906 earthquake and was rebuilt by 1909. The present lighthouse is in the shape of an octagonal pyramidal and has a DCB-24 optic system. It is listed as the longest operating lighthouse on the west coast. The location of the lighthouse on the 1867 map and on the 1977 map is the same. The structures surrounding the lighthouse have changed several times during the 100 year period. The 1977 map is virtually the same as today. No structure found in the 1977 map have been removed, however, many are in varying stages of deterioration.



HISTORICAL BASE MAP
ALCATRAZ ISLAND 1977
 (Shaded Areas Recommended For Archeological Research)
GOLDEN GATE
NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
 CALIFORNIA

SHEET 3 OF 3
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A ramp (or road) would be constructed from the wharf at the southeast corner of the island to the top of the island. The ramp was planned to be out of the view of ships entering the Golden Gate. The location was intended to protect the island troops and the movement of artillery and supplies. Construction was started in 1852 and it was one of the first projects completed. The path of the ramp is the same on the two maps. It has been resurfaced and widened when necessary and continues to serve as the main route for visitors of today. The thirteen-story climb has not changed in over a hundred years. The two maps, with the lighthouse and the ramp serving as references, will facilitate in locating structures in future articles.

There are two excellent references for the Post of Alcatraz Island and historical information including activities during the American Civil War. An exceptional reference is: Thompson, Erwin N., "The Rock: A History of Alcatraz Island, 1847 - 1972," Historic Resource Study, U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park, 1979. The other reference is: Martini, John A., "Fortress Alcatraz, Guardian of the Golden Gate".

With each edition of the Alcatraz Sentinel news letter there will be a short bio of a “FOCWA” officer or member. This issue features Robert Hubbs, Charter Member and member of both the Board of Directors and a 2010 officer as Historian.

FOCWA – Newsletter Bio

Robert R. Hubbs is a Charter Member of the Friends of Civil War Alcatraz, a member of the Board of Directors of that organization and the Historian for that group. He serves as a Coastal Defense Volunteer on Alcatraz and is doing research on the Post of Alcatraz Island and the Civil War. His wife and he are active members in the South Bay Civil War Round Table, the Peninsula Civil War Round Table, and the San Francisco Civil War Round Table. His family roots are in Illinois where four of his great, great grandfathers served in the Illinois Volunteer Regiments for the Union Infantry. Two of them died while on active duty and are buried in National Military Cemeteries located in Kentucky and Missouri. Grant, Lincoln, and Civil War Battles and Battle Sites are the primary interests in his Civil War research projects.

“Bob”, as he is known on Alcatraz Island, is a retired College Chemistry Professor and a former Dean. His professional career began as a Chemist for the Department of Agriculture followed by serving as a high school science teacher, a college professor and a college dean. His professional career began in 1956 and he retired in 2006. From 1963 until 2006 he held a full time Faculty position with the Foothill De Anza Community College District from 1963 to 1967 at Foothill College and from 1967 to 2006 at De Anza College. For 10 years he held the position of Dean of Physical Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering at De Anza College. He also held the position of Dean of Applied Sciences at De Anza College for 5 years. As a prominent chemical educator he was appointed to commissions that served and represented the American Chemical Society and to Science and Engineering Liaison committees advising the State of California on Higher Education Issues. He was active as a consultant and a contributor to the Scientific Publishing Profession. He has been very active in a number of Professional, Research, and Volunteer Societies as a participating member and as an officer.

As an admirer of Grant, he mentions with a degree of pride that he has maintained an ongoing interest in the Union General for more than four decades. The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant have been compiled to form a set of 31 Volumes – Bob has acquired each and every volume as it was printed. Volume I was printed in 1967 and Volume XXXI was printed in 2009. The late John Y. Simon, Editor of the Grant Papers, is listed high among those who Bob credits among his Civil War Studies mentors.

Judy, his wife, and he live in Sunnyvale, CA. They are the parents of a daughter and a son and have a grand son. Judy being a long time season ticket holder of the San Francisco Giants compliments their activities in addition to the study of the Civil War.