Form No. 10-306 (Rev. 10-74)

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED FEB 24 1976
DATE ENTERED JUN 23 1976

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC: La Isla de los Alcatraces; Fort Alcatraz; Post at Alcatraz; Pacific Branch, U.S. Military Prison; U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, Alcatraz Island; Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary; Alcatraz Island

AND/OR COMMON: Alcatraz

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: Not applicable (Alcatraz Island) — NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN: San Francisco — VICINITY OF — CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Fifth

STATE: California — CODE: 06 — COUNTY: San Francisco — CODE: 075

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
X DISTRICT	X PUBLIC	OCCUPIED	AGRICULTURE	X MUSEUM
BUILDING(S)	PRIVATE	X UNOCCUPIED	COMMERCIAL	X PARK
STRUCTURE	BOTH	WORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONAL	PRIVATE RESIDENCE
SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	ENTERTAINMENT	RELIGIOUS
OBJECT	IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTED	GOVERNMENT	SCIENTIFIC
	BEING CONSIDERED	YES: UNRESTRICTED	INDUSTRIAL	TRANSPORTATION
		NO	MILITARY	OTHER:

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: *(If applicable)* National Park Service, Western Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER: 450 Golden Gate Avenue, Box 36063

CITY, TOWN: San Francisco — VICINITY OF — STATE: California

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: San Francisco City Hall

STREET & NUMBER: Polk & McAllister Streets

CITY, TOWN: San Francisco — STATE: California

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE: Historic American Buildings Survey CAL-1792

DATE: Not known — X FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN: Washington — STATE: District of Columbia

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
__EXCELLENT	X DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
__GOOD	__RUINS	X ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Alcatraz is a large rock in San Francisco Bay, originally barren and covered with white pelican droppings. It is about a half mile long, 525 feet wide and 140 feet high. Subsequent to American acquisition in 1848, it was turned into a fortress beginning in 1853. Throughout the 19th Century its buildings were mostly of masonry and brick (the fortifications, citadel, sally port, etc.) or wood frame (living quarters, warehouses, and other support structures). As the island's importance as a prison eclipsed its importance as a fortification, a complex of newer prison and support buildings was erected during the early part of the 20th Century. During this time the old fortifications and their support buildings were obliterated, partially obliterated, or altered, and replaced with buildings of steel-reinforced concrete.

On the summit of the island, the upper two floors of the old brick Citadel were demolished and in 1909 the main prison building was erected over the bottom story of the Citadel, using its brick/masonry walls as part of the foundation. Thus the bottom story of the old Citadel, in deteriorated condition, is preserved along with its dry moat in a basement beneath the cell block. Two cast-iron staircases and the granite portal with drawbridge pulleys of the old Citadel were salvaged and incorporated elsewhere into the new military prison. The original iron-barred cells of the 1909 army prison building were later partially replaced with tempered tool-resistant steel cells by the U.S. Bureau of Prisons. This main prison building, of steel-reinforced concrete, and the remains of the Citadel, are in fair condition today.

At the southeast end of the island, during the early 1970s the General Services Administration demolished three guard apartment buildings, a duplex residence, and four small cottages, leaving piles of rubble which are there today. These buildings fortunately were of minimal historical significance themselves.

A more serious loss was the burning, during the Indian occupation, of the officers' club, warden's residence, medical officer's residence, lighthouse and light keeper's residence. The lighthouse was rebuilt by the U.S. Coast Guard. The warden's house and officers' club survive only as burned out concrete shells; there are only foundations of the others.

Above the dock, relatively unaltered, is an artillery casemate for cannon which once defended the dock from hostile landing. During the 19th Century, wood frame barracks stood on top of the casemate. In 1905 these were replaced by a three-story reinforced-concrete officers' quarters and barracks. Although having suffered vandalism during the Indian occupation, this building is intact.

Northwest of the dock, the original brick/masonry Sally Port of the 1850s was modified in later years with additional construction of a firing range and chapel over it, but the essential defensive features, illustrating its function as a Sally Port, remain today.

On the northwest end of the island are four industrial buildings: a power house built about 1915; a Quartermaster/Commissary building built during the 1920s; an industrial warehouse built in 1927; and an industrial shop and laundry built in 1940. The 1940 building is the only surviving building erected by the U.S. Bureau of Prisons while Alcatraz was a Federal Penitentiary; all other buildings on the island date from the military period. The 1927 building was erected on top of extensive 19th Century fortification brickwork. Of these four buildings, the power house is intact, but with its interior seriously vandalized during the Indian occupation. The other three are also intact, but all suffered some vandalism during the Indian occupation, and all buildings on the island are suffering decay from the effects of salt air on metal window sash, metal fixtures, and even the steel reinforcing the concrete, causing serious exfoliation and spalling. The overall condition of buildings on the island may be described as "deteriorated", although a few exceptions are "good" or "excellent".

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	__ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	X MILITARY	X SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
X 1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
X 1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1853 - 1971 BUILDER/ARCHITECT U.S. Army, U.S. Bureau of Prisons

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Alcatraz is an island in San Francisco Bay which is of national historical significance in the categories of military history and social history (penology). During the mid-19th Century it was an impressive fortress guarding, along with Fort Point and, later, Angel Island, the entrance to San Francisco Bay. As a fortress, it was as nearly impregnable as technology of the time could make it--an "American Gibraltar"--and it was crowned with a brick/masonry "Citadel" which may have been unique in the annals of American military architecture. In later years it served as a military prison, and in more recent times became a Federal penitentiary and one of America's most famous penal institutions, with a reputation rivalling France's Devil's Island. As a Federal prison, it housed some of America's most dangerous criminals, those whom it was believed were too unmanageable for incarceration in other Federal prisons. Its location in the Bay rendered Alcatraz nearly escape-proof.

The above statement of significance is based on the following historical summary:

The word "Alcatraz" is an English corruption of the Spanish word "Alcatraces", which means "pelicans". A Spanish naval lieutenant, Don Juan Manuel de Ayala, gave this name in 1775 to what is now known as Yerba Buena Island in San Francisco Bay. What is now known as Alcatraz was then an unnamed, barren rock which, like Yerba Buena, played host to countless pelicans, which had covered both islands with their droppings. An English naval officer mistakenly transferred the name of La Isla de los Alcatraces to the rock, and in its corrupted form, the misnomer stuck.

The Spanish and later Mexican governments of the province of Alta California made no use of the rock. It was still in its natural, barren, guano-encrusted state when acquired by the United States in 1848. President Millard Fillmore reserved use of the island for "Public" (governmental) purpose in 1850, and the United States Army soon included it in plans for the defense of San Francisco Bay, the only pre-Civil War fortifications to be erected on the Pacific Coast.

During the early 1850s, the Army developed plans to fortify three important points guarding the entrance to the Bay: Punta de Cantil Blanco on the south side of the narrow Golden Gate strait; Lime Point on the north side of the strait; and Alcatraz Island, three miles from the strait inside the Bay, but facing right down its throat. (Fort Point, now a National Historic Site, was built on the leveled cliff of Punta de Cantil Blanco; the fort at Lime Point was never erected.)

Beginning in 1853, construction of batteries, barracks, quarters, casemates, sally port, "Citadel", the first lighthouse on the Pacific Coast, and other facilities commenced on Alcatraz. Original plans called for 89 guns, although in 15 years there were 150 or more. The "Citadel" erected on the summit of the island was a brick and masonry three-story fortified barracks protected by a dry moat crossed by a drawbridge.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Cameron, Robert, Alcatraz - A Visual Essay. San Francisco: Cameron & Co., 1974. 96pp.

Gardner, Roy, Hellcatraz, the Rock of Despair. N.p., 1939.

Hart, Herbert, "The Army on Alcatraz." Ms., compiled by the Council on Abandoned Military Posts, 1969.

Johnston, James, Alcatraz Island Prison. New York: Scribner, 1949.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 12.5

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	10	550715	4186870	B	10	551185	4186500
C	10	551025	4186285	D	10	550545	4186515

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the historic district at Alcatraz is a rectangle lying with its long axis in a northwest-southeast direction encompassing all of the island and immediately surrounding waters, and is approximately 925 feet wide and 1,975 feet long, its corners delineated by the four UTM reference points listed above.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

(Revision of form prepared by Park Technician Lee Shenk, GGNRA, in February 1975)

NAME / TITLE
Gordon Chappell, Regional Historian

ORGANIZATION
National Park Service, Western Regional Office

DATE
September 22, 1975

STREET & NUMBER
450 Golden Gate Avenue, Box 36063

TELEPHONE
(415) 556-4165

CITY OR TOWN
San Francisco

STATE
California

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES X NO ___ NONE ___

OCT 14 1975

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is ✓ National ___ State ___ Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE Deputy Assistant Secretary

DATE FEB 17 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Acting DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 6/23/76

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Acting

DATE 6.18.76

Item 8 SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

This Citadel featured bastions on two opposite corners, and was designed to be defended solely by rifle fire emanating from rifle slits on the first and second floors. The rifle embrasures were protected by iron shutters. Similar in design and construction to coastal artillery forts such as Fort Point, the Alcatraz "Citadel" was probably unique in that it was designed for defense entirely by rifle fire and contained no cannon.

Alcatraz never fired a shot in anger, however had it and Fort Point not existed during the Civil War, it is possible and even likely that Confederate commerce raiders such as the Shenandoah might have entered San Francisco Bay and played havoc with its shipping, with the city itself, and even with the naval yard at Mare Island and the arsenal at Benicia. Without ever firing a shot, Alcatraz and Fort Point very likely performed just precisely the job they were designed to do by serving as a deterrent to hostile attack or raid on San Francisco Bay. During the latter years of the war, partly because the Lime Point fort had not yet been built, additional batteries were erected on Angel Island, north of Alcatraz, to serve as a third point of defense of the entrance of the Bay.

During the Civil War, Alcatraz was one of the objects of a subversive Confederate plot hatched by Southern sympathizers in California, but the plotters, led by Asbury Harpending and Ridgely Greathouse, could not muster sufficient supporters to attempt seizure of the undermanned Bay forts. Abandoning that plan, they subsequently attempted to outfit a schooner as a Pacific Coast Confederate raider or privateer, but a garrulous plotter tipped their hand and the schemers were captured and subsequently imprisoned in the guardhouse at Fort Alcatraz. Thus Alcatraz played a dual role in the only important Confederate subversion on the Pacific Coast.

Alcatraz had served unofficially as a military prison since 1859, due to the difficulty of escaping from the island. Although located only a little over a mile from the San Francisco shore, strong currents and tidal action together with the cold temperature of Bay waters renders this a difficult swim even for the most accomplished and fit swimmers. Consequently, although Alcatraz's importance as a fortress declined rapidly after the Civil War due to the inability of its type of fortifications to withstand modern rifled artillery fire as demonstrated at Fort Pulaski and elsewhere during the war, the island's importance as a prison gradually grew. Soldiers sentenced by courts martial to long prison terms for serious offenses, Apache Indians, pacifists, and during the First World War, prisoners-of-war, were incarcerated on Alcatraz. During the latter part of the 19th Century the garrison was known as the "Post at Alcatraz" rather than as Fort Alcatraz, since especially after the introduction of the Endicott system of coastal defense in the 1880s it was no longer significant as a fortress. Increasingly used for a prison, in 1907 it was officially designated the Pacific Branch of the United States Military Prison, a designation changed in 1915 to U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, Alcatraz Island. It was during this time that most of the fortifications were modified, partly demolished or obliterated and new barracks, prison, and other structures were built.

It was not until 1934 that Alcatraz's role as a military prison ended and it became a civil penitentiary, operated from then until its closure in 1963 as the maximum security, minimum privilege facility of the U.S. Bureau of Prisons. Title to Alcatraz was formally

Item 8 SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

transferred to the U.S. Department of Justice in 1938. During the 29 years that it served as a civilian federal penitentiary, less than 1,600 men were confined there. Convicts normally were not sentenced directly to Alcatraz, but transferred there from other prisons when officials decided they were causing too much trouble. Thus Alcatraz housed the worst, most unmanageable convicts convicted of Federal crimes.

No prison is one hundred per cent escape-proof, not even Alcatraz surrounded by cold, forbidding waters. A total of 39 men attempted to escape from Alcatraz while it was a federal penitentiary. All but five are accounted for, and those five are presumed to have drowned. One man succeeded in swimming the three miles to Fort Point, but was at the stage of exhaustion when he reached there, only to be recaptured. Several swam only as far as "Little Alcatraz", the rock off the island's northwest corner, and had to be rescued.

Among the infamous criminals imprisoned on Alcatraz were Robert Stroud, "Birdman" of Alcatraz, Alfonse Capone, and "Machine Gun" Kelly. Just as such men have been the subject of Hollywood films, Alcatraz, too, has been featured in motion pictures and, more recently, television programs.

In 1963, the prison closed and the island was left vacant, its future in doubt. In 1969 radical Indian demonstrators took advantage of its vacancy and landed and occupied the island. From 1969 until 1971 Alcatraz was the focus of a continuing demonstration by Indian activists. During that time, four historic buildings burned and virtually all the others were seriously vandalized. The Indians occupied "The Rock" for eighteen months, until the last were removed by Federal marshals.

Following the Indian occupation, the General Services Administration, which administered the island, demolished three apartment buildings which had housed both married and bachelor guards, a duplex residence, and four small cottages, all on the southeast end of the island. Piles of debris from this demolition are still there today.

In 1972, Alcatraz was made a part of Golden Gate National Recreation Area under the National Park Service, which initiated tours of the island. By 1975, it had become San Francisco's most popular tourist attraction.

NR Copy

NHL 1/17/86

76 000209

Form No. 10-306 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC: ALCATRAZ ISLAND; LA ISLA DE LOS ALCATRACES; FORT ALCATRAZ THE POST AT ALCATRAZ; PACIFIC BRANCH, U.S. MILITARY PRISON; U.S. DISCIPLINARY BARRACKS, ALCATRAZ ISLAND; UNITED STATES PENITENTIARY AT ALCATRAZ ISLAND

AND/OR COMMON: ALCATRAZ

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: n/a

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN: San Francisco n/a __ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Fifth

STATE: California CODE: 06 COUNTY: San Francisco CODE: 075

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
X DISTRICT	X PUBLIC	__OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	X MUSEUM
__BUILDING(S)	__PRIVATE	X UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	X PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	__EDUCATIONAL	__PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	__ENTERTAINMENT	__RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		__NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER:

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: *(If applicable)* National Park Service, Western Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER: 450 Golden Gate Avenue, Box 36063

CITY, TOWN: San Francisco n/a VICINITY OF STATE: California

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: San Francisco City Hall

STREET & NUMBER: Polk and McAllister Streets

CITY, TOWN: San Francisco STATE: California

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE: National Register of Historic Places

DATE: June 23, 1976 X FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: National Park Service

CITY, TOWN: Washington STATE: District of Columbia

L1 06/23/76
NL 01/17/86

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
__EXCELLENT	X DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
X GOOD	X RUINS	X ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
X FAIR	X UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Alcatraz is an island in San Francisco Bay, approximately one third of a mile long, 525 feet across at its widest and 140 feet high, comprising 22.5 acres. It is composed of irregularly stratified sandstone thinly covered with the guano of seabirds. It is these birds to which the island owes its name. (Alcatraz is ancient Spanish for "cormorant," although commonly translated as "pelican.") Four miles directly east of the entrance to San Francisco Bay, it commands the entrance to that vital harbor. Therefore the island has been the location of much construction over the years which turned it first into a bastion of harbor defense, and later into an isolated and ironically highly visible prison of great notoriety. At present it is partially covered with imported soil and vegetation and dotted with structures that are without exception associated with the island's dual historic role. Since the entire island has been a restricted access government reservation throughout its history, it retains a remarkable degree of integrity in its physical features, setting, and association.

A physical history of Alcatraz is complex since construction activity occurred at different times, and for different purposes. The earliest structures still on the island are the largely brick remains of the military fortifications begun in 1853 and expanded upon until 1874. They are important because they are the earliest permanent fortifications the United States built on the Pacific Coast. As much as possible, they are described as a distinct thematic group.

Although Alcatraz was first designated a military prison in 1861, surviving fortification-era structures were used for incarceration until the present prison-era structures were built by the U.S. Army beginning in 1909 and continuing after 1934 by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Most of these structures were built of reinforced concrete, and placed on top of the older fortifications, altering the latter to a great degree. These structures are important because of Alcatraz's unique role as the first general military prison in the U.S.Army and its short but notorious span as the nation's ultimate prison symbol. The buildings of the prison-era are discussed as single group related to its theme.

FORT ALCATRAZ

The construction of fortifications on Alcatraz was planned to take advantage of the natural topography of the island. Therefore, open barbette gun batteries were built along the verge of the island's sheer cliffs to provide a "circle of fire" against an enemy vessel approaching San Francisco through the Golden Gate and attempting to pass to the north or the south. Platforms for the batteries were blasted out of the cliffs at a height of twenty-five feet all around the island. The island's east side was considered the best landing site, and here was constructed a wharf with a switchback road that led to the top of the island. Commanding the heights from a central location was a brick citadel used as a defensive barracks for last ditch defense, and from which to cover the entire island with small arms fire in case of a landing. The road to the citadel was flanked by a defensive wall, and the area between road and wharf commanded by a stout brick guardhouse. Thus, all of the island was, in a sense, incorporated into the fort design.

ROAD: The earliest existing sign of man's impact on Alcatraz is the switchback road leading from the wharf toward the top of the island, and branching off toward the North Battery. This road was begun by blasting from the wharf to the guardhouse site in the fall of 1853. It is flanked by a brick defensive wall made doubly necessary by the crumbly nature of the rock substrate. At some later date, the road was covered with its present concrete surface. The defensive wall continues far along toward the northwest end of the island to provide a covered way for access to that area. It varies between 20 and 25 feet high and remains structurally sound, with much of its granite coping still in place. The road is visible in photographs 8 and 9. The defensive wall is visible in photographs 5 and 6, and is referenced on the atta ched map as structures 205 and 206.

WHARF: During 1854, a wharf was constructed on the east side of the island at the foot of the road. Although modified and enlarged many times over the years, these changes were part of the island's significant past, and do not represent any loss of integrity. As one alights on what remains the only practical landing spot on the island, a stone bulkhead is crossed that is composed of the remains of the island's earliest gun platforms, most of which were removed and re-used during later reconstruction. Underneath can be seen the remains of brick and wooden piles as well as 1863 vintage iron screw piles that were used in the wharf's reconstruction at various times. Next to a frame building used as a waiting room are a set of iron spiral stairs salvaged from the 1909 cellhouse. The wharf is visible in photographs 3 and 4, and is referenced on the attatched map as structure number 211.

GUARDHOUSE/FIRST PRISON COMPLEX: One hundred yards up the road from the wharf is the rich melange of buildings that contain the original guardhouse much as it was built in 1857-58. This guardhouse, and its four later additions, is considered to be one of the most historically significant structures on Alcatraz. The original structure is a rectangular building 26' x 22' with a foundation of blue sandstone from nearby Angel Island and granite from faraway China, and stout walls of solid brick up to 5 feet thick. It sits astride the roadway which passes through a sallyport, once sealed off by doors in archways at either end. Two casemates were built for flank howitzers to fire south toward the wharf, while a third covered the northern approach. The gunrooms had narrow rifle slits in their walls to provide close range small arms fire upon attacking infantry. Immediately in front of the buildings, a dry moat cut deep into the isle's rock rim interrupts the roadway. One of the gunrooms has been restored to its original appearance. The scarp wall of brick and the counterscarp wall of finely cut blue sandstone are well preserved under the wooden roadway which replaced the drawbridge. The granite lintel upon which the drawbridge rested, the iron pulley wheels by which it was raised, and a heavy wooden door with metal studs to resist chopping all remain intact to enhance the setting. The lower level of the guardhouse was used as the island post's first prison. This gloomy room was entered by a hatchway providing covered access from the casemate above. The tiny space was constantly overcrowded during the Civil War, so the inland howitzer casemate became the general prison, the guards occupied the casemate across the sallyport on the water side and none of the cannon were ever mounted. Around 1861-62, the basement was converted into a prisoners' washroom. Consequently, exterior doors were knocked into the walls on both levels, and a 6' x 8' door broken into the scarp. Pipes were added in the basement, but the rest of the original structure remains intact and unaltered beneath later additions.

In September 1862, Department headquarters ordered a frame building built to imprison Southern sympathizers. This structure became the first of four cellblock additions that were made to the guardhouse, eventually turning the entire complex into the "old" or first prison. In 1867, the first (frame) addition was replaced by a brick cellblock of the same size on the same site. At an unknown later date, the upper portion was replaced by a two-story frame building used by the Bureau of Prisons as an electric shop. However, the 1867 foundation of this second prison on Alcatraz remains obvious immediately to the northwest of the guardhouse, and extends nearly to the first floor level on the uphill side where it functions as a retaining wall. Between 1868 and 1887, three wooden additions were made to the complex to house cells for the ever-increasing numbers of prisoners. These structures were abandoned as prisons in 1904 and removed probably in 1912.

A 1-1/2-story gable roof brick wing was added sometime between 1869 and 1879. It abuts the guardhouse to the south and stands over the roadway on graceful brick arches. Its function has been to support the prison with a tailor shop, bookbinder's shop, library, and court-martial room. When the prison cells were relocated, the attic became a target range. By 1933, a two-story reinforced concrete addition to the old guardhouse roof had been constructed in Mission Revival style, using the granite coping of the guardhouse as its foundation. This wing was used as quarters, a school, and sometimes a chapel. The additions to the guardhouse are intact and structurally sound. The guardhouse/first prison complex is visible in photographs 5 through 9, and is referenced on the attatched map as structures 22, 77, and 89.

NORTH BATTERY AND ADDITIONS: The high brick defensive wall continues north from the guardhouse, along the outside of the switchback road, climbing past the concrete ruins of a 1910 post exchange to the point where it connects with the brick scarp wall of the old North Battery. Sections of the scarp dating to 1856 are visible from the island's perimeter, although much was covered by the construction in 1910-12 of a complex of reinforced concrete and brick buildings that housed an electric power plant and heating furnaces, a quartermaster's storehouse and garage. The area was further impacted by the construction of a model industries building in 1929. Nevertheless, considerable important features of both the pre-Civil War batteries and their 1870-74 reconstruction exist juxtaposed underneath the intrusive industrial buildings. Strikingly apparent from the shore as one walks north from the guardhouse, is the square protrusion of the North Battery scarp called the North Caponier. This stout brick structure, reminiscent of the guardhouse, was built in 1857-58 to provide small arms and howitzer fire along the scarp. Originally two stories high, the second story gunroom and drawbridge were demolished during battery modernization in 1872. The lower floor, once a magazine, was eventually converted into a heating oil tank, yet the sandstone foundation and high brick walls capped with granite remain unaltered to the second story. A "Warning: Keep Off" sign of the penitentiary era covers the outside brick wall.

Along the battery's rear slope, an 1872 reverse wall remains visible, and the existence of a covered way is hinted at in two brick archways. These archways are the remains of traverses built for protection between each pair of cannon, their earthwork coverings having long since been stripped off. In the reverse slope are two brick lined magazines or bombproofs, and the entrance to a 180' long tunnel constructed in 1873 to provide safe access to the west side of the island. At the extreme north west tip of the island, clearly visible under the model industries building are the

curved brick scarp of the west end of Battery Halleck and the right angle extension of Battery Rosecrans' scarp. Both these remains are essentially intact and well preserved under the industrial building. They are extraordinarily important as the oldest remaining sites of 15-inch Rodman cannons on the West Coast. Further remains of 1870s batteries now removed are three arched magazine traverses extant under the outside walls of the prison's exercise yard. One structure, which once functioned as a bombproof shelter, was later used as a morgue by the Army, then converted to an auxiliary electric generator room by the Bureau of Prisons. It lies on the east side of the yard. On the north side is a magazine in an excellent state of preservation, with its original thick wood and brass-studded door still inside. The third magazine archway abuts the south side of the yard wall. The North Battery and additions are visible in photographs 10 through 13, and are referenced on the attatched map as structures 207, 208, 209, 67, 79, and 82.

SOUTH BATTERY: The final extant traces of pre-Civil War-era barbette batteries are the partially visible sandstone scarp wall of the South Battery. This was the first permanently emplaced fortification on the West Coast of the United States. Much of the original terreplein and caponier are believed to exist intact under the fill of the parade ground, while a portion of the scarp made of great finished blocks of sandstone is plainly visible where it angles away from the bluff. A later retaining wall nearby is made of chunks of masonry and granite, in all probability from the gun platforms and coping of South Battery and its 1870s successors. There is a strong probability of archeological remains existing in this location. The remains of the South Battery are visible in photograph 14, and are clearly labelled on the atta ched map.

CITADEL: In many ways, the most signifigant remains of the antebellum fortifications are the dry moat and intact bottom story of an infantry redoubt known as the "Citadel." This building is the only structure of its type to have existed on the Pacific Coast and may well be unique in the annals of American third system forts. As completed in 1859, it was a stout brick and masonry structure 112' x 52' rising three stories, the bottom story entirely below ground level. At opposite corners were two bastions extending outward 19' x 20' to allow enfilading small arms fire to bear upon infantry assaulting the building walls. The entire building was surrounded by a brick-lined dry moat, and could only be entered by doorways at either end closed by drawbridges. On the east side of the Citadel, a brick retaining wall was built against the loose sandstone slope, and a set of granite steps was built into the wall. There were windows only on the top floor, while the lower two levels had only narrow rifle slits covered with iron

Totten shutters. The building could accommodate one company in peace time and two in war. Rooms for quarters and mess were in the upper stories, while the bottom level had four officers' kitchens, four bedrooms, five storerooms, the company kitchen, a wash room, a prison, and an additional light and dark cell. Built into the counterscarp wall on the outside of the moat were eight small storage rooms and an enlisted men's privy. Underground on the southeast side of the moat was a large complex of water cisterns, which was expanded in 1862 to make the waterless island hold out as long as possible under siege. In 1882, when the Citadel was long obsolete in its defensive role, it was converted to six sets of officers' quarters. Six kitchens and servants' rooms with dumb waiters were installed in the basement, and some of the rifle slits converted into windows. Although the top two floors of the Citadel were demolished in 1908 to make way for the cellhouse, the bottom level and dry moat were incorporated into its foundation and remain essentially intact underneath. The iron shutters in the bastion rifle slits, and the cisterns, hearths, and fireplaces all remain preserved in the eerie darkness below ground. Six iron beams that supported the heavy concrete roof of the Citadel were incorporated into the cellhouse, as were the handsome granite drawbridge lintels which were reinstalled at the main and commandant's entrances. The pulley wheels which once raised the drawbridge remain visible. One iron staircase was reused in the cellhouse by "A" Block and leads from the cellhouse to the showers. It is possible to walk the entire circuit of this Citadel in the dry moat, now a cellar beneath the 1909 cellhouse. The Citadel's lower story is visible in photograph 16, and it is clearly labelled on the map as being under structure number 68.

CASEMATE BARRACKS: Improvements in weaponry during the Civil War amply demonstrated that the Citadel was obsolete in its role as a defensive barracks. Therefore, beginning in 1865, a bombproof casemate barracks was constructed overlooking the wharf where its cannons were to add to the weight of fire in that direction. This was a heavily built structure designed for storehouses on a lower tier and fortified barracks above. Thirteen arched casemates were constructed in an intricate fashion of brick in Flemish bond. Perhaps the finest craftsmanship on Alcatraz is visible in their construction. The casemates were lined with mortar, whitewashed, and provided with flues for exhaust and embrasures for cannon which were never mounted. The casemates were used instead as storerooms, bath and washrooms, a gymnasium, and predominantly kitchen and mess facilities. The original embrasures were enlarged in 1899 to facilitate these non-combat uses, and the floor's concrete covered in 1906. In 1884, the northernmost magazine became the first submarine mine storage area on the Pacific Coast, and was then used as an early mine casemate between 1891 and the beginning of the

Spanish-American War. During that time a cable gallery leading to the minefields was built in the form of a tunnel to the water's edge. In later years, this casemate was altered when doors and windows were cut through the walls. Now a small museum, the hiss of the waves can be heard beneath the cable gallery's hatch. By the frame waiting room, a portion of the casemate wall was removed for a freight elevator, but elsewhere the casemate barracks remains in a fairly good state of preservation, altered little from its planned use as a storehouse.

Although the second brick story was never completed, a retaining wall, behind the covered way in the rear of the casemates, was expanded into utility rooms and completed to a height of two stories. Large graceful brick arches help support the structure. On two levels are rooms intended for use as a bakery, blacksmith's forge, coal storage, water storage and privies. The covered way led outside via a tunnel on the north of the barracks. Over the portal is the date of construction, 1866. The casemate barracks is visible in photograph 3, and is referenced on the map as structure number 64.

PARADE GROUND: One of the most striking alterations to the island was the virtual leveling of the southeast end during the 1870s. Removing the rock bluffs was tactically necessary to avoid the hazard of flying rock splinters from enemy artillery "overs" raining down on gun crews trying to serve the batteries in this area. Eventually, the topography of the island took its present form -- an extensive level plateau between the southern bluff and the Citadel above, that became used as the post's parade ground (and site of the first and no longer remaining prison stockade). Around 1930, the parade ground was surfaced in concrete. It is visible in photographs 1 and 2, and referenced as structure 210 on the attatched map.

THREE-STORY BARRACKS: In 1905, military prisoners removed an earlier wooden barracks and built a three-story barracks on top of the unfinished casemate barracks, using hollow concrete blocks of their own making. The interior of this structure has been heavily altered over the years by the Bureau of Prisons, so that by 1936 it contained 11 apartments and 9 single rooms for the correctional officer staff and their families. The windows and interior walls were heavily vandalized during the Indian Occupation. Interesting graffiti from that time is considered to have some historic value and has been documented accordingly. The three-story barracks is visible in photograph 3, and is labelled as structure 64 on the map.

MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PRISON

The years between 1900 and 1907 brought great changes to Alcatraz. The fortifications had become obsolete by the 1880s, and a large influx of military prisoners from the Spanish-American war added greatly to the prison population. The 1907 decision to end the Coast Artillery role of the post and reconstitute it as the Pacific Branch, U.S. Military Prison resulted in a building program that culminated in the island's taking on its present form.

CELLHOUSE: By 1909, the top two floors of the old Citadel were removed and the construction of the present cellhouse begun. Military convict labor again was used to the extent practicable. The cellhouse was constructed of concrete reinforced with structural steel, iron I-beams, and cross girders. Features of the old Citadel were incorporated as previously noted. It is a two-story structure measuring 465' x 165' with two exterior rows of barred windows set in between ornamental concrete columns. The south wing is an administration area comprised of two stories of offices. The north wing contains showers, and clothing issue and work rooms in the basement; a dining hall and kitchen on the ground floor; and a hospital facility on the second floor. The main portion of the cellhouse is one huge room, two stories high, with four separate 3-tiered cellblocks, originally containing 600 cells.

In A Block, the original cell configuration remains visible. These cells are 5' x 9' with flat riveted iron bars, hinged doors and individual dead locks further secured by a long iron bar which dropped across an entire row of cells. When the Bureau of Prisons took over from the U.S. Army in 1934, they initiated a series of improvements designed to maximize the security of the cellhouse. Tool-proof steel bars were placed over all exterior windows and openings. The entrance through the administration area was remodeled into a fortified sallyport guarded by an armory of bullet-proof glass and steel. (This armory was improved and moved in 1959 to its present location on the left of the entrance hall.) Remote controlled tear gas dischargers were installed at the sallyport and in the mess hall. Along the interior walls of the main cellhouse at either end, walkways were installed to be used as gun galleries. They were protected by steel bars and later by a combination of chain link fence and armor plate. In 1940, further changes to the cellhouse turned D block into an isolation unit and separated it by an interior concrete wall. The cells of D Block were enlarged, and five lower cells were darkened for isolation purposes by the addition of solid steel doors. A library was created next to D Block by partitioning an area from floor to ceiling and covering it with heavy chain link fence.

The cellhouse has remained in a fairly good state of preservation over the years -- unaltered structurally in any significant fashion. Some spalling of concrete is apparent, especially around metal window sashes and other metal fixtures exposed to damp salt air. In some cases, the deterioration is serious enough to have exposed steel reinforcing rods. The interior of the cellhouse is gradually being repainted and cell interiors are being repainted and some restored to their original finished appearance during both the Army prison and federal penitentiary eras. Most of the adjoining service areas of the cellhouse are bereft of furnishings or equipment, although the clothing exchange retains the wooden cubbyholes for clothes, the kitchen retains ovens, cabinets, and steam trays, and the hospital retains some cabinetry. The bullet-proof glass and control panel have been stripped from the armory entryway. With the exception of the interior furnishings, mostly removed when the prison was abandoned in 1963, the cellhouse remains as it was from 1909 to 1963. It has an extraordinary effect upon anyone who enters it for the first time -- immediately stirring up feelings of a grim and silent place of isolation synonymous with the name "Alcatraz." The cellhouse is referenced as structure 68 on the attatched map, and is visible in photographs 15, 17, and 18.

YARD: Abutting the cellhouse on the northwest is the 1912 "stockade" -- a large cement surfaced exercise yard, surrounded by high walls of reinforced concrete. There are horseshoe pits and a weed-grown softball diamond in the corners. At the side by the cellhouse is a large concrete stepped retaining wall, used as seats, built in 1936. Along the top of the walls is a concrete walkway and two guard shelters, all virtually in ruins from exposure to salt air. In a far corner of the yard, an exit door leads to a steep set of steps terminating at a small concrete building. Built in the Mission Revival style in 1934, it housed a metal detector that prisoners passed through on their way to and from the industrial area. It is empty at present. The yard is visible in photograph 18, and is referenced as structure 201 on the attatched map.

INDUSTRIES: The metal detector shed leads to the northwest tipof the island where the long low-two story new industries building was constructed as a laundry in 1939. The three-story model industries building lies atop the pre-Civil War batteries in the area. The new industries building is interesting for its functional design, since all the rooms and guard galleries can only be entered from the outside for extra security. It is now vacant, and exposed to the elements which have caused significant deterioration on the exterior around its rows of banded steel casemate windows.

Also in this area is the powerplant complex built between 1910 and 1912. Its significance lies solely in its association with the construction of a modern and self-sufficient prison on the island. The machinery, now removed, had been heavily vandalized, and the broken windows leave much of the structure exposed and deteriorating at the hands of the elements. The industrial buildings are referenced on the attatched map as structures 67, 79, and 82. They are visible in photographs 9 through 13.

GUARD TOWERS: The Bureau of Prisons made other additions to improve security. Eventually, there were six guard towers at various locations throughout the island. At present, those on the model industries building roof and the wharf still stand. They are octagonal guardhouses with glass windows topped by pointed overhanging roofs. The "dock tower" has been restored and stabilized, and is important for its contribution to the historic prison setting. The "dock tower" is referenced as structure 14 on the map, and both remaining towers are visible in photographs 3, 5, and 13.

OFFICERS' QUARTERS: Two other groups of structures remain to be described. First are the ruins of various military and correctional officers' quarters about the island. Three Victorian houses were constructed along the switchback road in 1880-82 and removed in 1934 due to their proximity to the cellhouse. Their foundations, retaining walls, garden walks, staircases, and flower gardens survive as a reminder of the transitions the island has seen. At the crest of the roadway were two large sets of quarters, one built for the post commandant and later used as the warden's residence, the other built for the post surgeon. Only the shells of their walls remain after they were burned during the "Indian Occupation." Three modern apartment buildings of reinforced concrete were constructed in 1940 on the perimeter of the parade grounds for correctional officers' and their families. After being vandalized by the Indian occupiers they were demolished in 1971 by the General Services Administration to avoid any possibility of further occupation of the island. These ruins are a reminder of the Indian Occupation and the government's reaction to it. The ruins of the commandant's quarters are structure 76 on the map, and are visible in photograph 15. The ruins of the 1940 apartments are structure(s) 83, and are visible in photograph 2.

AIDS TO NAVIGATION: Second are those few structures on the island not associated either with the military fortifications or the prison buildings. The present lighthouse was built in 1909 near the site of the first lighthouse on the West Coast. The original lighthouse was demolished in 1909, since the new cellhouse towered above it and blocked the light to the north. During that year, an

84', six-sided fluted tower was built of reinforced concrete with a steel frame lens room on top. The 1902 vintage fourth order fresnel lens was transferred from the old lighthouse to the new. Two wood frame cement-plastered dwelling wings were built around the tower for keeper's quarters, and the light was lit on December 1, 1909. The keeper's quarters were destroyed by fire in 1970, and the lighthouse damaged. At present, the repaired lighthouse operates on an automatic basis, while the concrete foundations of the keeper's quarters contain generators and other equipment. The fresnel lens has been replaced by a modern double-drum reflecting light. The present fog signals at either end of the island are located in the approximate locations of the first fog signal apparatus (a bell), but are not historic structures. The lighthouse is referenced on the atta ched map as structure number 3, and it is visible in photograph 15.

SUMMARY

The historic structures on Alcatraz Island exist in every state of preservation from very good and structurally sound, to ruins. In general, the brick fortifications have best withstood the ravages of time and need little more than repointing and painting, where historically appropriate, for their protection. They have suffered mostly from alterations due to later reconstruction or burial, but even those changes reflect historically significant transitions. The concrete building have decayed in varying degrees from the effects of the elements. Exfoliation is evident. Neglect and vandalism between 1963 and 1971 are responsible for broken windows in many buildings. Those in the cellhouse have been repaired.

In spite of some deterioration, Alcatraz Island remains an historic property of exceptional importance. The essential nature of the structures as fortifications and prison buildings remains largely intact, and the qualities that made them important are still evident in abundance for public appreciation and understanding.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	__ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	X MILITARY	X SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
__1700-1799	__ART	X ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
X 1800-1899	X COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
X 1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1847 - 1971 BUILDER/ARCHITECT U.S. Army, Federal Bureau of Prisons

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Alcatraz Island has been the site of events that have had an important impact on the nation as a whole from before the Civil War through an Indian Occupation of the 1970s. Its significance in the areas of military history, social history (penology), and maritime commerce is enhanced by the integrity of the resource which follows from the fact that access to the island has been strictly limited by the U.S. Government throughout its history. Maritime commerce was aided by the first U.S. lighthouse on the Pacific Coast built here in 1854; its successor still serves. By the start of the Civil War, Alcatraz was the key fort in the center of the most important Pacific port in nineteenth century America, mounted the first permanent cannons on the West Coast of the United States, and featured a brick and masonry defensive barracks that may have been unique in the annals of American military architecture. In the areas of both military and social history, Alcatraz is noteworthy because it was the first official army prison in the nation. When it became a civilian penitentiary in 1934, it quickly gained nationwide attention due to its association with many of the most infamous criminals of the gangster era and the bloody escape attempts made from there. It is representative of the far end of the penological spectrum, since it was a prison designed for punishment and incarceration only, rather than rehabilitation. It is of national importance in this regard because of its use as the respository of incorrigibles throughout the Federal prison system. Three-quarters of a million people per year now take the National Park Service's tours of the Island, dramatic proof of the impact Alcatraz has had on the American people. It is certainly the best known prison in American history and, arguably, along with France's "Devil's Island," may be the most famous prison in the world. In terms of the National Historic Landmarks Program, the history of Alcatraz Island is nationally significant under Theme 5 (Political and Military Affairs), subthemes 5b (1830-1860), and 5c (1865-1914); Theme 7 (America at Work), Subtheme 7j (Engineering), facet 5 (Military Fortifications); Theme 9 (Society and Social Conscience), Subtheme 6b (Social and Humanitarian Movements), facet 2 (Humanitarian Movements), subfacet c (Prison Reform). The applicability of these National Historic Landmark themes to Alcatraz Island is thoroughly discussed in the discussion of its historical context which follows this statement of significance.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The rocky barren island that rises out of San Francisco Bay may have been used by the native Indian population as a way station for their canoe trips across the waters, but the first known exploration of the site was by Juan Manuel de Ayala's expedition which sailed the Spanish frigata San Carlos through the Golden Gate in 1775. Making cartographic observations by small boat, his Lieutenant, Canizares, described an island "so arid and steep there was not even a boat harbor there: I named the island de los Alcatrazes because of their being so plentiful there." Alcatrazes is archaic Spanish for cormorant.(1) The description certainly fits Alcatraz Island, although his chart gives the name to the island today called Yerba Buena. That chart may be in error, since landing places do exist on Yerba Buena -- the facts will probably never be known. By 1826, the name Alcatraz was applied, whether correctly or not, to its present location.

At the end of the era of Mexican California, an exception was made to the usual rule of government control of coastal islands, and title granted in 1846 to one Julian Workman (a naturalized Mexican), on condition that he establish a navigation light there. Upon assumption of control by the United States, John Charles Fremont purchased the still vacant island for the government in his "official capacity of governor of California." In 1850, Alcatraz was specifically reserved for military purposes by order of President Millard Fillmore, based on the United States' assumption of Mexican government property. The need for Fremont to have purchased the island was therefore disavowed. The matter became the basis of a series of legal actions by Fremont and his heirs that continued until the 1890s. However, the island remained under firm control of the U.S. Government.

The initial survey of Alcatraz was one of the first conducted in the Tenth Military District, while still under the command of Brig. Gen. Stephen W. Kearny. The map that resulted from this 1847 survey became the basis for the establishment of fortifications on the island over the next twenty hears. Lt. W. H. Warner who carried out the survey was a brilliant young engineer officer who was killed by Indians in the Sierra Nevada two years later.

In 1848, gold was discovered in the Sierra foothills, and by the next year, San Francisco was in the midst of the madness engendered by the one of the greatest mass migrations mankind had ever known. In the Gold Rush year of 1849 alone, some 775 vessels cleared the ports of the world to journey to the booming city. Such a dramatic increase in the area's population, commerce, and wealth had an immediate impact upon the need for the protection of the city and its maritime commerce.

Alcatraz was, therefore, included in Congress' 1850 appropriation for the building of eight lighthouses on the Pacific Coast. On board the ship Oriole, dispatched from Baltimore to round Cape Horn in 1852, came the craftsmen and much of the material for construction. Begun on December 15, 1852, the lighthouse became the first lasting impact of man on the island. The third order Fresnel lens was mounted in the brick Cape Cod style structure built on the south crest of the island, and the lamp was lit on June 1, 1854 -- the first on the West Coast. By lining up Alcatraz's light with the one at Fort Point, pilots could bring vessels over the dangerous San Francisco Bar. In 1856, a fog bell arrived and was placed at the edge of the bluff on the south side of the island where it was struck automatically by a mechanism driven by a weight in a tower.

The great increase in commerce underscored the need to protect the harbor militarily, and thus the fortification of Alcatraz was begun. In March of 1850, a Joint Board of Engineers and Naval Officers recommended the building without delay of fortifications that included extensive works on Alcatraz that would protect the harbor in concert with works at Fort Point and Lime Point, at either end of the Golden Gate. Chief Engineer Joseph G. Totten subsequently established a Board of Engineers for the Pacific Coast, which stated that: "Nature seems to have provided a redoubt for this purpose in the shape of Alcatrazes Island . . . it is proposed here to construct only open batteries, to be armed with the heaviest pieces -- a defensive barracks will be sufficient to complete the defenses." The batteries would mount 89 guns and create a "ring of fire" emanating from the island in all directions. (2)

Arriving in San Francisco in the summer of 1853, 1st Lt. Zealous B. Tower immediately began work on the fortifications. Local craftsmen and laborers began setting up shop, and the road leading from the wharf to the guardhouse was blasted that October. The steep sides of the island were blasted down to a height of 25' all around to improve the natural defenses, and temporary guns were mounted in batteries by September 1854. The materials gathered for building the works indicate the early development of San Francisco as a port, as well as giving insight into the physical nature of these important early fortifications. Blue sandstone from Angel Island was the most common stone used in the works; the best brick came from upriver in Sacramento. Granite was most desirable in critical areas such as corners and coping, but was hard to come by -- some came from new quarries at Point Reyes, while some was shipped from faraway China -- a reflection of young San Francisco's immediate propulsion into the arena of worldwide trade and commerce. Barbette batteries of brick with granite

copings and concrete foundations were constructed on the north and west sides of the island, while the south battery was largely built of blue sandstone. Hastened to completion by threats of war with Britain and Spain, the 8" and 10" columbiads mounted by April 15, 1855, made history as the United States' first permanent harbor defense batteries on the West Coast.

With the batteries nearing completion, attention turned to the infantry defenses of the island. The guardhouse/sallyport astride the road from the island's single landing area to its heights was finished by 1858, and provided covering fire in either direction -- toward the wharf or toward the north battery. Tragedy first struck Alcatraz in 1857 when part of the hill behind the defensive wall leading to the guardhouse collapsed, burying two laborers.

At the crest of the island, work began on the defensive barracks, soon nicknamed "the Citadel." This noble brick and masonry building was designed to command the entire island by small arms fire from the heights, and serve as a last redoubt in case of enemy landings. It is unique in all of West Coast military architecture -- and perhaps the only structure of its kind in all of America's third system fortifications. Thus, all Alcatraz Island is a fort. The few similarly fortified islands such as Fort Sumter, Fort Jefferson, and Fort Warren are entirely flat. (3)

The completion of the infantry defenses was overseen by another young engineer officer whose name was destined to make Civil War history -- James B. McPherson fought brilliantly in the western campaigns until he met his death outside Atlanta in 1864. It is said that even hard-boiled Major General William T. Sherman wept unashamedly when McPherson's body was brought to him. (4) The works were inspected by the Army's Inspector General, J.F.K. Mansfield, in January 1859, who found that, "the workmanship, as well as plans for the defenses on the island are excellent." (5) McPherson turned over the defensive works on Alcatraz to the commanding officer of Company H, Third U.S. Artillery, in December of 1859. The first troops took post on the island on December 30, 1859.

At the eve of the Civil War, the 86 cannon on Alcatraz included the only permanently mounted guns defending the most important harbor of the western Americas. For many years, California had voted Democratic, and there was a considerable amount of pro-Southern sentiment to be feared by those loyal to the Union. In an act typical of his sense of honor, Brig. Gen. Albert Sydney Johnston ordered 10,000 muskets and 150,000 rounds of ammunition transferred from a vulnerable location at the Benecia Arsenal to more easily protected Alcatraz. He then resigned his commission

to fight and die for the Confederacy. The cases of McPherson and Johnston are representative of the numbers of officers from the San Francisco Bay area who went to fight on both sides of the Civil War.

The election of 1861 confirmed California's basic loyalty to the Union, yet fears for the safety of San Francisco remained, nurtured by concerns about Confederate commerce raiders and the fact that no naval ships adequate to deal with the threat were on hand until the fall in 1864, when the Passaic class ironclad, U.S.S. Camanche was assembled and launched. Until that time, constant vigilance by the forts at Alcatraz and Fort Point was the answer. The results of that vigilance were apparent on October 1, 1863, when the Alcatraz garrison fired what were its only shots in anger as a warning to a strange ship ignoring standing orders to use only the channel between San Francisco and Alcatraz and proceeding under tow to a Sausalito anchorage. The vessel turned out to be H.M.S Sutlej, which promptly responded with a proper 21-gun national salute. That the importance of Alcatraz to national defense was well appreciated at the highest levels of government was firmly demonstrated when the Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, personally intervened to order a series of 2,000 detailed photographs of the island seized and destroyed in the interests of wartime security.

On July 1, 1864, Major General Irvin McDowell arrived in San Francisco to assume command of the Department of the Pacific after an unsuccessful series of commands back east against the Confederacy's finest generals. Soon after his arrival, he went on a highly publicized and highly embarrassing tour of the harbor defenses. Target practice at Fort Point commenced immediately after the passage of the Pacific Mail steamer St. Louis through the channel. Rather than arcing across to Lime Point, the ten-year old fuses burst prematurely in the wake of the steamer, causing great dismay. At Angel Island, the same problem caused shell fragments to splash close to an early paddlewheel tug, Goliah (notable herself for involvement in the celebrated case of the fugitive slave, Archy Lee). Later that day on Alcatraz, the assembled dignitaries witnessed "an excellent artillery practice . . . with a degree of satisfaction that atoned somewhat for the fiasco at Fort Point and Angel Island." (6) Although the press hurled charges of sedition , the young commander of Fort Point was vouched for by his superiors as a loyal officer. This incident demonstrated, no doubt, a universal plague of remote commands -- old ammunition-- while Alcatraz's performance may be attributable to the fact that it guarded the best munitions due to its secure location.

On July 20, 1864, an event of historic proportions occurred when the first 15" Rodman cannons on the West Coast were mounted at Alcatraz's Battery Mansfield. Apparently the siting of these cannon was less than ideal, for their blast sent burning wads and powder showering upon the gunners at Battery Rosecrans (the remains of the latter battery are very well preserved). In the concurrent celebration, two drunken soldiers fell to their deaths from the island's cliffs.

Alcatraz's role as a nationally significant prison had its genesis during the Civil War. Although the fort's guardhouse was built with a lower guardroom for drunks and deserters, the first distinctive use of the island for a prison dates to 1861. Before that time, the army had no military prison distinct from post guardhouses. However, "since August 27, 1861, Alcatraz Island in the Harbor of San Francisco, has been the point for collecting prisoners on the Pacific Coast." As a result, Alcatraz became the first true military prison in the United States and the only such prison in the United States until the establishment of the U.S. Military Prison at Leavenworth in 1874. Prior to 1874, Army prisoners in the rest of the country were kept in various state prisons, while prisoners from the Department of the Pacific went to Alcatraz. (7) Not surprisingly, the tiny room in the basement of the guardhouse soon became filled, so that the inland howitzer casemate began to be used for prisoners, and by 1863, a separate wood frame building had been erected nearby for that purpose.

In the wake of Union military defeats and prompted by fear of civilian unrest, President Abraham Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus for those suspected of disloyalty. The general orders received on the West Coast in September 1862 directed the Army to see to "the arrest of all persons guilty of disloyal practices. Those of them who are leading seccessionists will be confined on Alcatraz." Among the citizens arrested and sent to Alcatraz on the basis of this order were W.R.I. McKay, former Commissary Officer at San Quentin Prison and Assemblyman-elect E.J.C. Kewen of Los Angeles. In July and August 1864, Charles L. Weller, the Chairman of the Democratic State Central Committee was held on the island. The largest number of civilians came between April and June 1865 when 39 were imprisoned for being "so utterly infamous as to exult over the assassination" of President Lincoln. (8)

Perhaps the most famous of the Civil War prisoners were the would-be privateers, Harpending, Greathouse, Rubery, et al, who schemed to capture a steamer for the Confederacy loaded with California gold. Their instrument was to be the schooner J.M. Chapman which they had clandestinely loaded with cannon, stores, and 15 fighting

men. Discretion not being their strong point, however, they talked too freely and the plot was uncovered. Chapman and plotters were seized by men from the sloop-of-war Cyane at the moment she left her berth on March 15, 1863. The very tug that was to have towed Chapman to the high seas landed her instead at the Alcatraz wharf where the privateers became prisoners.

As a result of this activity, by the end of the Civil War, the brooding rock in the bay had earned a name as a "Symbol of Federal Power in Civil War California,"(9) and could justly be described as America's Rock of Gibraltar on the Pacific.

In post-Civil War America, Fort Alcatraz continued in its role of prominence. From a post-war complement of 96 heavy cannon, the armament was increased rapidly to an impressive 154 heavy pieces in October of 1867. The island post reflected the lessons of the recent conflict as a period of expansion and modernization began. The army built a brick casemate featuring 13 gun embrasures which controlled the approaches to the wharf which was the island's only landing site. In peacetime, this structure served as a storehouse and mess hall, with a wooden barrack building on top of it. Prisoners turned to grading huge expanses of sheer rock cliff behind the batteries to solve the problem of rock splinters from enemy shells which could impact behind the emplacements. In each battery, earth-covered traverses gave access to built-in powder magazines. Battery parapets were thickened using sand to absorb shell impact. The bustle of the post continued as units sallied forth to fight in the Indian Wars and the number of departmental prisoners grew. Indian prisoners were also sent to Alcatraz at this time. The very first Indian on Alcatraz was an unfortunate from Nebraska named "Paiute Tom." He was shot and killed by a sentry two days after his arrival. Two participants from the bloody Modoc War, Barncho and Sloluck, were spared hanging at the last minute and sent to Alcatraz. Warlike captives from the Chiricahua Apaches, 19 Hopis discontent on their new reservation, and some Indian scouts who mutinied at Cibicue in 1880 were among the other noteworthy Indian prisoners.

During the years of reconstruction of the batteries between 1870 and 1874, most of the guns had been dismounted. Many of the number on hand were pre-Civil War vintage and eventually were blown to pieces for easy removal, or the pieces were simply tossed off the bluffs. Modern replacements did not appear, and defense construction went largely unfunded after 1874. Although not officially declassified as a coast artillery post until 1907, Alcatraz had effectively reached the twilight of an era. When in 1874, a bulkhead at the wharf was built of old gun platform stones, the armament on the rock stood at three cannon!

Ten years later, the post was the site of the first submarine mine storage area on the West Coast. The northernmost casemate of the casemate barracks was suitably modified -- and later remodelled into one of two initial mine casemates (in this case, meaning "control room") in San Francisco Bay. This arrangement was only temporary, and had been removed by the Spanish-American War, although the tunnel that led the control cable to the water's edge remains.

San Francisco was a major staging port for the Philippine expedition in the Spanish-American War and the subsequent Philippine Insurrection. Alcatraz felt the wake of that "splendid little war" when the decision was made to hold all military prisoners returning from the Philippines on the rock. The prison population jumped at the turn of the century from 25 to 441. A classic wooden stockade built where the island had been leveled years before was only a temporary solution, since in 1907, the island was dropped as an army post under the Department of the Pacific and reorganized as the Pacific Branch, U.S. Military Prison. This new role, and the serious fear of fire together prompted a building program that, between 1903 and 1912, made many of the changes described in section 7 that gave Alcatraz its present appearance. After 1915, the military prison continued to operate as the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks -- a change that organized the majority of prisoners considered lesser offenders into disciplinary battalions designed to encourage a transition back into the military mainstream.

The routine of the island prison was broken in 1919 when 200 conscientious objectors and their supporters went on a food strike at Leavenworth. They were forthwith transferred to Alcatraz where one unusual Sunday they received a visit by a group led by Upton Sinclair and Stanford University President David Starr Jordan, handing out what was perceived as "Bolshevik literature." Visiting policy was to change suddenly and drastically when the Bureau of Prisons took over in 1934. Eighty some odd years of Army control came to an end and a remarkable era was about to begin.

Prohibition had been repealed, and the Depression was upon the country. Organized criminal activity, fostered by bootlegging and poverty, had grown to such an extent that the time is sometimes referred to as "the gangster era." Criminals such as John Dillinger, "Pretty Boy" Floyd, Clyde Barrow, "Ma" Barker, and "Scarface" Al Capone received wide publicity and some of the attributes of folk heroes, while at the same time the nation was shocked by the epidemic of kidnapping and bank robberies. Legislation was passed that allowed the Federal government to

intervene in law enforcement to a greater extent than ever before, while its penal facilities were upgraded accordingly. Attorney General Homer S. Cummings announced that Alcatraz was to become a "special institution of maximum security and minimum privilege for the confinement of such ruthless individuals." The Bureau of Prisons, established in 1930, was given a legislative mandate to "assure the proper classification and segregation of federal prisoners according to their character, [and] the nature of their crime . . ." (10) Thus, Alcatraz became the ultimate prison within a nationwide system, and a safety valve that took the problem cases to allow rehabilitation and the chance of better treatment to continue elsewhere.

Accordingly, the regime at Alcatraz was one of rigid discipline and tight security. This increase in security was accomplished not only by the physical changes detailed in section 7, but by the maintenance of an extraordinarily low convict to guard ratio of three to one.

Exactly fifty years ago, at the time of this writing, the federal penitentiaries at McNeill Island, Washington; Atlanta, Georgia; and Leavenworth, Kansas, rid themselves of their worst cases and sent them to Alcatraz under tight security. Precautions were taken so far as to bring the railroad cars the men rode over to the island via barge. Only then did the prisoners leave their train. Handcuffed and shackled, they were marched uphill to the cellhouse. Included among them were such infamous criminals as Al Capone, "Machine Gun" Kelly, Harvey Bates and Alfred Bailey. Later the roster of the notorious included the likes of "Doc" Barker, Robert "Birdman" Stroud, Alvin Karpis, and others.

Notorious or not, the policy on Alcatraz remained the same. Isolation from the outside world, so tantalizingly near, was enforced by strictly limited correspondence and visiting privileges. Only food, clothing, shelter, and necessary medical attention were given as a right -- everything else had to be earned by good behavior, including the chance to work at a prison industrial job. Before 1940, a rule of silence was enforced in the cellhouse -- to be relieved only at meals, while walking in the yard, and at industrial work. Prisoners remained on Alcatraz until their adherence to the rules demonstrated that they were candidates for transfer -- and then they were sent to another, lesser Federal institution. Rarely were any released to the outside from Alcatraz. Specific information about the island prison was jealously guarded, seemed to enhance the aura of mystery, and contributed to the perception of Alcatraz as America's Devil's Island. The boredom of the routine, and the pervasiveness of the silence prompted one prisoner in the 1930s to exclaim that "they never give a break" on Alcatraz. Usually operations were routine, but occasional strikes, escapes, or other violence shattered the tense peace and made news.

Strikes in 1936 and 1937, triggered by lack of privileges, involved much of the prison population in tense standoffs lasting weeks at a time. Ringleaders were punished with lockup in the pitchdark "dungeon," in reality the old citadel remains under the cellhouse.

The "Battle of the Rock" gained nationwide attention in May of 1946 when desperate convicts seized control of the cellhouse and faced correction officers and U.S. Marines in a violent battle involving guns and concussion grenades that lasted for three days. The end was bloody, but not surprising -- no one escaped. Three convicts and two guards were dead. Two other participants faced the gas chamber at San Quentin.

Alcatraz was touted as escape-proof after 1934. Although 39 men were involved in 14 separate attempts, there is no proof that anyone succeeded. Several attempts failed violently. "Doc" Barker met his end in a hail of gunfire at a small beach facing the Golden Gate that now bears his name. In 1937, two men succeeded in getting off the island, but are listed as missing and presumed drowned in the fierce tides, cold water, and thick fog that surrounded the island. In 1962, three men dug escape holes in the rear of their cells and made it to the water's edge in the dead of night. They too were never found. Their fate must be considered a mystery, although prison records state: missing, presumed drowned.

The 1962 escape attempt pointedly underlined the age and deterioration in the cellhouse. Many of the industries buildings were similarly timeworn. The expense of a thorough modernization was considered prohibitive. In addition, an island prison had very high operating expenses -- exacerbated by the fact that all fresh water had to be brought over by barge. The penitentiary had begun in the administration of Franklin Roosevelt, but by the time of JohnF.Kennedy a new ethic was emerging, that emphasized rehabilitation, not punishment. Alcatraz's days were numbered. When a modern high-security facility opened in Marion, Illinois, many of the remaining prisoners went there, and the island fort closed in 1963. As the very last convict to leave passed the reporters who were there for the occasion, he offered the comment that, "Alcatraz never was no good for anybody!" The more than one hundred years of historic significance of Alcatraz began to draw to a close. The facility was abandoned to the elements and only the lightkeepers remained to tend to the lighthouse.

Alcatraz again gained short-lived national attention when "Indians of all Tribes" occupied the island on November 20, 1969, to gain attention for the needs of their people. A state of siege existed until June 1971 when all of the remaining Indians were ejected.

The visible signs of that period are broken windows, interesting graffiti throughout the island's structures, and the ruins of the post exchange, warden's residence, medical officers' residence, and lighthouse keeper's quarters destroyed in a fire of undetermined origin. The invisible signs of the occupation are increased awareness of the Indian's social concerns, and the establishment of D-Q University at Davis, California.

In 1972, Alcatraz Island became part of a newly established unit of the National Park System: the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Since that time, the island has been viewed by a constant flow of visitors who receive information on all phases of its history from Park Ranger interpretive guides. The cleaning of debris, opening of formerly hazardous areas, painting, sealing, and mitigation measures to control deterioration have been some of the important accomplishments of the National Park Service. The interior of the old guardhouse sallyport and gunroom has recently been restored to its 1860s appearance.

Alcatraz Island has had a long and colorful past. It has played an important role in the military and social history of the San Francisco Bay region, the West Coast, and the nation as a whole. In assessing its potential significance as a National Historic Landmark, it may fairly be said that the island has served as both America's Gibraltar on the Pacific and the Devil's Island of the United States.

FOOTNOTES

1. Thompson, Erwin N., The Rock: A History of Alcatraz Island, 1847-1972; Denver Service Center, National Park Service, p.3

2. Thompson, op.cit., p. 15

3. ibid, p. 493.

4. Richard M. Ketchum, ed., American Heritage Pictorial History of the Civil War, American History Publications, 1960, p. 526.

5. Masefield to McDowell quoted in Herbert M. Hart, The U.S. Army on Alcatraz 1969, p. 51.

6. San Francisco Evening Bulletin, July 14, 1864, in notes supplied by Robert J. Chandler.

7. Letter from Erwin N. Thompson to Ron Treabess, GGNRA; December, 1973; ref: NA RG 94 A60.

8. Chandler, Robert J. "The Press and Civil Liberties in California During the Civil War, 1861-1865", unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California at Riverside, 1978.

9. Chandler, Robert J., "Fort Alcatraz: Symbol of Federal Power in Civil War California" to be published in Periodical 51, Council on America's Military Past, 1985.

10. Alcatraz, Bureau of Prisons publication, Washington, D.C., c.1961, quoted in Hart, op.cit., p. 112.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

BERGEN, PHILIP & DENEVI, DON, Alcatraz '46: The Anatomy of a Classical Prison Tragedy, Leswing Press, San Rafael, California, 1974.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 47

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	10	550715	4186870	B	10	551185	4186500
C	10	551025	4186285	D	10	550545	4186655

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the historic district at Alcatraz is a rectangle lying with its long axis lying in a Northwest-Southeast direction, encompassing all of the island and immediately surrounding waters. The boundary is approximately 925 feet wide and 1,975 feet long, its corners delineated by the four UTM reference points listed above.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE		CODE		COUNTY		CODE
STATE	n/a	CODE	n/a	COUNTY	n/a	CODE n/a
STATE	n/a	CODE	n/a	COUNTY	n/a	CODE n/a

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Stephen A. Haller, Acting Park Historian

ORGANIZATION
Golden Gate National Recreation Area

DATE
April 15, 1985

STREET & NUMBER
Fort Mason, Building 201

TELEPHONE
(415) 556-9504

CITY OR TOWN
San Francisco

STATE
California

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES____ NO____ NONE____

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is ____National ____State ____Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

CHANDLER, ROBERT J., "The Press and Civil Liberties in California During the Civil War, 1861-1865", Doctoral Dissertation, U.C. Riverside 1978.

COSTRO, RUPERT, "Alcatraz", The Indian Historian, Winter, 1970.

HART, HERBERT, "The U.S. Army on Alcatraz", Ms., Compiled for the Council on Abandoned Military Posts, 1969.

KETCHUM, RICHARD M., The American Heritage Pictorial History of the Civil War, American Heritage Publications, 1960.

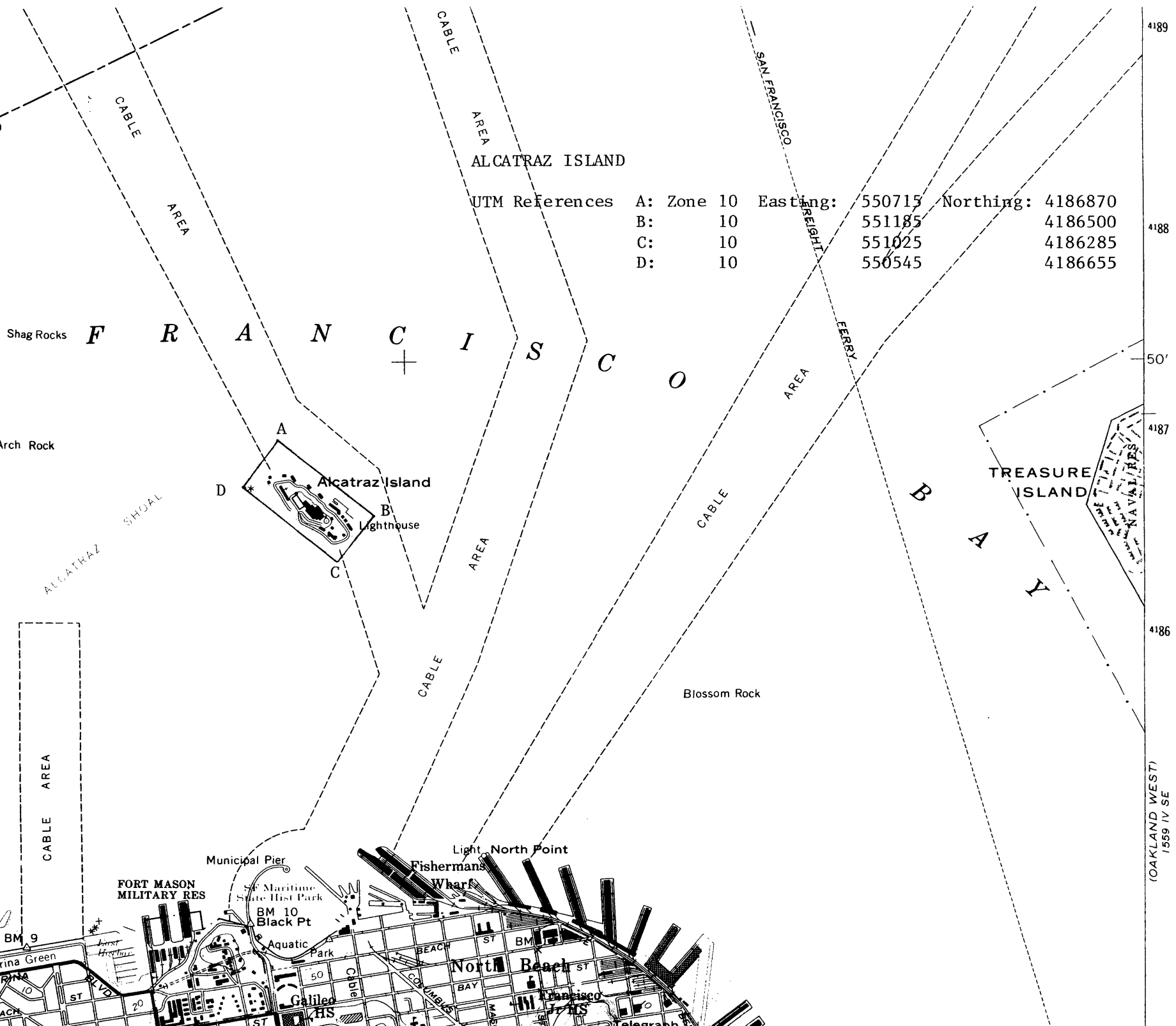
JOHNSTON, JAMES, Alcatraz Island Prison, New York, Scribner, 1949.

STROBRIDGE, WILLIAM F., ed., "California Letters of Major General James McPherson, 1858-1860", Ohio History 81 (Winter 1972).

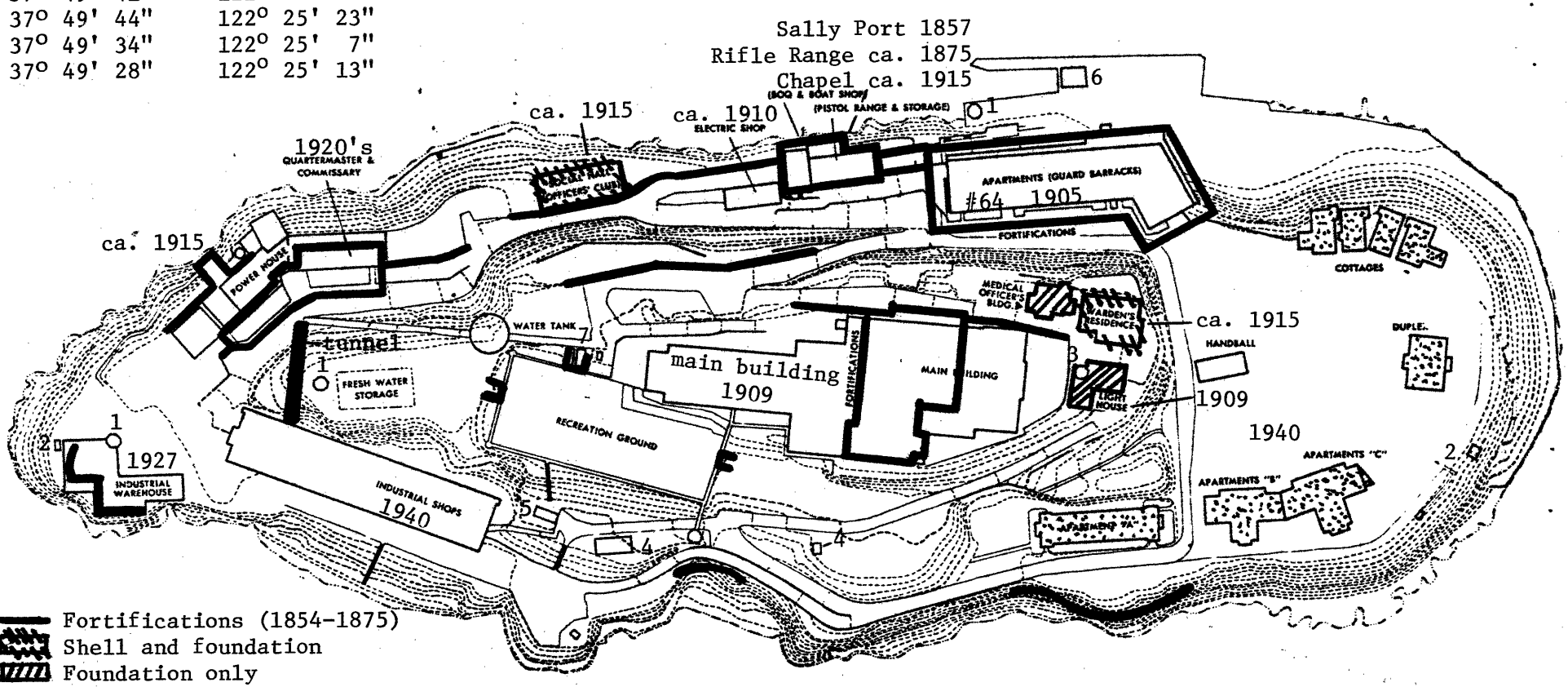
THOMPSON, ERWIN N., The Rock: A History of Alcatraz Island, 1847-1972, Denver Service Center, National Park Service, 1979.

ALCATRAZ ISLAND

UTM References			Easting:	Northing:
A:	Zone 10		550715	4186870
B:	10		551185	4186500
C:	10		551025	4186285
D:	10		550545	4186655



	Latitude	Longitude
NW	37° 49' 41"	122° 25' 36"
NE	37° 49' 44"	122° 25' 23"
SE	37° 49' 34"	122° 25' 7"
SW	37° 49' 28"	122° 25' 13"



Fortifications (1854-1875)
Shell and foundation
Foundation only
Rubble

1 Guard towers
2 Fog horns (2)
3 Light (Coast Guard maintained)
4 Garden structures - greenhouse, storage
5 Guard shack - checkpoint
6 Dock building - visitor waiting area
7 Morgue

ALCATRAZ ISLAND

Existing Structures
and REMAINS

SCALE (approximate):
1"=160'

MAP NO