

= Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary =

The Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary or United States Penitentiary , Alcatraz Island (often just referred to as Alcatraz) was a maximum high @-@ security federal prison on Alcatraz Island , 1 @.@ 25 miles (2 @.@ 01 km) off the coast of San Francisco , California , USA , which operated from 1934 to 1963 .

The main prison building was built in 1910 ? 12 during its time as a United States Army military prison ; Alcatraz had been the site of a citadel since the 1860s . The United States Disciplinary Barracks , Pacific Branch on Alcatraz was acquired by the United States Department of Justice on October 12 , 1933 , and the island became a prison of the Federal Bureau of Prisons in August 1934 after the buildings were modernized to meet the requirements of a top @-@ notch security prison . Given this high security and the location of Alcatraz in the cold waters and strong currents of San Francisco Bay , the prison operators believed Alcatraz to be escape @-@ proof and America 's strongest prison .

Alcatraz was designed to hold prisoners who continuously caused trouble at other federal prisons . One of the world 's most notorious and best known prisons over the years , Alcatraz housed some 1 @.@ 576 of America 's most ruthless criminals including Al Capone , Robert Franklin Stroud (the " Birdman of Alcatraz ") , George " Machine Gun " Kelly , Bumpy Johnson , Rafael Cancel Miranda , Mickey Cohen , Arthur R. " Doc " Barker , and Alvin " Creepy " Karpis (who served more time at Alcatraz than any other inmate) . It also provided housing for the Bureau of Prisons staff and their families . A total of 36 prisoners made 14 escape attempts during the 29 years of the prison 's existence , the most notable of which were the violent escape attempt of May 1946 known as the " Battle of Alcatraz " , and the arguably successful " Escape from Alcatraz " by Frank Morris , John Anglin , and Clarence Anglin in June 1962 in one of the most intricate escapes ever devised . Faced with high maintenance costs and a poor reputation , Alcatraz closed on March 21 , 1963 .

The three @-@ story cellhouse included the main four blocks of the jail , A @-@ Block , B @-@ Block , C @-@ Block , and D @-@ Block , the warden 's office , visitation room , the library , and the barber shop . The prison cells typically measured 9 feet (2 @.@ 7 m) by 5 feet (1 @.@ 5 m) and 7 feet (2 @.@ 1 m) high . The cells were primitive and lacked privacy , with a bed , a desk and a washbasin and toilet on the back wall , with few furnishings except a blanket . African @-@ Americans were segregated from the rest in cell designation due to racial abuse being prevalent . D @-@ Block housed the worst inmates and five cells at the end of it were designated as " The Hole " , where badly behaving prisoners would be sent for periods of punishment , often brutally so . The dining hall and kitchen lay off the main building in an extended part where both prisoners and staff would eat three meals a day together . The Alcatraz Hospital was above the dining hall .

Corridors of the prison were named after major American streets such as Broadway and Michigan Avenue . Working at the prison was considered a privilege for inmates and many of the better inmates were employed in the Model Industries Building and New Industries Building during the day , actively involved in providing for the military in jobs such as sewing and woodwork and performing various maintenance and laundry chores .

Today the penitentiary is a public museum and one of San Francisco 's major tourist attractions , attracting some 1 @.@ 5 million visitors annually . The former prison is now operated by the National Park Service 's Golden Gate National Recreation Area , and the badly eroding buildings of the former prison have been subject to restoration works in recent times and maintained .

= = History = =

= = = Construction = = =

The main cellhouse was originally the location of the cellhouse for the military citadel and prison which existed on Alcatraz from the 1860s . A new cellhouse was built in 1910 ? 12 on a budget of \$ 250 @.@ 000 and upon completion , the 500 feet (150 m) long concrete building was reputedly the

longest concrete building in the world at the time . In 1933 ? 34 this building remained , but was modernized and became the main cellhouse of the Federal Penitentiary until it was closed in 1963 . When the new concrete prison was built in 1910 ? 12 , many materials were reused in its construction . Iron staircases in the interior and the cellhouse door near the barber 's shop at the end of A @-@ Block were retained from the old citadel and massive granite blocks originally used as gun mounts were reused as the wharf 's bulkheads and retaining walls . Many of the old cell bars were used to reinforce the walls , causing structural problems later due to the fact that many placed near the edge were subject to erosion from the salt air and wind over the years .

After the U.S. Army 's use of the island for over 80 years (1850 ? 1933) , the island came under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of Justice for use by the Federal Bureau of Prisons . The purpose of this transfer was to punish those involved in the rampant crime which prevailed in the country in the 1920s and 1930s . The United States Disciplinary Barracks on Alcatraz was acquired by the United States Department of Justice on October 12 , 1933 , and the island became a Federal Bureau of Prisons federal prison in August 1934 . The \$ 260 @,@ 000 conversion to the federal prison took place from January 1934 . Dr. George Hess of the United States Public Health Service was appointed the chief medical officer of the prison and Dr. Edward W. Twitchell became a consultant in psychiatry for Alcatraz in January 1934 . The hospital facilities were checked by three officials from the Marine Hospital of San Francisco . The Bureau of Prisons personnel arrived on Alcatraz in early February ; among them was Loring O. Mills , acting chief clerk . In April 1934 , the old material was removed from the prison , holes were cut in the concrete and 269 cell fronts were installed , built using four carloads of steel ordered from the Stewart Iron Works . A legend at the works is that a shipment of cells and iron accidentally fell into San Francisco Bay during transportation from San Francisco Dock to Alcatraz and were never recovered , thus had to be reordered . Two of four new stairways were built , as were 12 doors to the utility corridors and gratings at the top of the cells . On April 26 , an accidental small fire broke out on the roof and an electrician injured his foot by dropping a manhole cover on it . Fencing around Alcatraz was added by the Anchor Post Fence Company and emergency lighting in the morgue and switchboard operations were added by the Enterprise Electric Works . In June 1934 , the Teletouch Corporation of New York began the installation of an " electro @-@ magnetic gun or metal detecting system " at Alcatraz ; detectors were added on the wharf , at the front entrance into the cellblock , and at the rear entrance gate . The correctional officers were instructed how to operate the new locking devices on July 30 , 1934 , and the new radio equipment was tested by both the United States Coast Guard and the San Francisco Police Department on the same day . Final checks and assessments were made on the first two days of August .

= = = Early history = = =

Alcatraz was designed to hold prisoners who continuously caused trouble at other federal prisons , a " last resort prison " to hold the worst of the worst criminals who had no hope of rehabilitation . At 9 : 40 am on August 11 , 1934 , the first batch of 137 prisoners arrived at Alcatraz , arriving by railroad from the United States Penitentiary in Leavenworth , Kansas at Santa Venetia , California , before being escorted to Alcatraz , handcuffed in high security coaches and guarded by some 60 FBI Special Agents , U.S. Marshals , and railway security officials . Some 32 detainees from the original military prison were reported to have been amongst the first inmates . Most of the prisoners were notorious bank robbers and counterfeiters , murderers , or sodomites . Amongst the first inmates were also 14 men from McNeil Island , Washington . On August 22 , 43 prisoners arrived from Atlanta Penitentiary and 10 from North Eastern Penitentiary , Lewisburg , Pennsylvania . On September 1 , one prisoner arrived from Washington Asylum and Jail and seven from the District of Columbia Reformatory in Virginia , and on September 4 , another batch of 103 prisoners arrived by train from Leavenworth . Prisoners continued to arrive , mainly from Leavenworth and Atlanta in 1935 and by June 30 , 1935 , the penitentiary had a population of 242 prisoners , although some prisoners such as Verrill Rapp had already been transferred from Alcatraz some months earlier . On the first anniversary as a federal penitentiary , on June 30 , 1935 , the Bureau of Prisons observed

that : " The establishment of this institution not only provided a secure place for the detention of the more difficult type of criminal but has had a good effect upon discipline in our other penitentiaries also . No serious disturbance of any kind has been reported during the year . " The metal detectors initially caused a problem by overheating and often had to be turned off . After the failure of the Teletouch Corporation to amend the problem , in 1937 their contract was terminated and they were charged over \$ 200 for three new detectors supplied by Federal Laboratories .

On January 10 , 1935 , a severe storm caused a landslide on Alcatraz , causing the Model Industries Building to slide . This marked the start of a series of changes to the structures on the island . A riprap was built around it and it was strengthened and a guard tower added to the roof in June 1936 , and the same month the barracks building was remodeled into 11 new apartments and nine single rooms for bachelors ; by this time there were 52 families living on Alcatraz Island , including 126 women and children . The problems with the industries building and continuing utility problems with some of the old buildings and systems led to extensive updates in 1937 , including new tool @-@ proof grills on the ventilators on the roof of the cell house , two new boilers installed in the power house and a new pump for salt water sanitation and guardrails added to stairways . In 1939 ? 40 , a \$ 1 @. @ 1 million redevelopment was under swing , including construction of the New Industries Building , a complete overhaul of the power house with a new diesel engine , the building of a new water tower to solve the water storage problem , new apartment blocks for officers , improvements to the dock , and the conversion of D @-@ block into isolation cells . The changes were completed in July 1941 . The workshops of the New Industries Building became highly productive in the making of army uniforms and cargo nets and other items which were in high demand during World War II and in June 1945 it was reported that the federal penitentiaries had made 60 @, @ 000 nets .

= = = Notoriety = = =

Alcatraz gained notoriety from its inception as the toughest prison in America and considered by many to be the world 's most fearsome prison of the time , and former prisoners would frequently report acts of brutality and inhumane conditions which severely tested their sanity . Ed Wutke was the first prisoner to commit suicide in Alcatraz . Rufe Persful chopped off his fingers after grabbing an axe from the firetruck , begging another inmate to do the same to his other hand . One writer described Alcatraz as " the great garbage can of San Francisco Bay , into which every federal prison dumped its most rotten apples . " In 1939 the new U.S. Attorney General Frank Murphy attacked the penitentiary , saying " The whole institution is conducive to psychology that builds up a sinister ambitious attitude among prisoners . " The reputation of the prison was not helped by the arrival of more of America 's most dangerous crooks including Robert Stroud , the " Birdman of Alcatraz " , in 1942 , who spent 17 years at Alcatraz . Like a songbird ? s call , Stroud was complex . He was also a pimp , a raging psychopath and impulsive murderer whose hazard reduced only with age . He entered the prison system at age 19 , and never left . Stroud killed a guard , tangled with other inmates and spent 42 of his 54 years in prison in solitary confinement .

While Stroud was a ? birdman , ? his scientific inquiry all took place at Fort Leavenworth , not Alcatraz as the myth goes . Ironically , he wasn ? t allowed to pursue avian science , or even harbor birds , at the timeless bird habitat that is Alcatraz Island .

However , somewhat contradicting its reputation and the fact that many former inmates named it " Hellcatraz " based on its horrors , some prisoners reported that the living conditions in Alcatraz were much better than most other prisons in the country , especially the food , and many volunteered to come to Alcatraz .

On December 3 , 1940 , Henri Young murdered fellow inmate Rufus McCain by running downstairs from the Furniture Shop to the Tailor 's Shop where McCain worked and violently stabbing McCain in the neck ; McCain died five hours later . Young had been sentenced to Alcatraz for murder in 1933 and he was involved in an escape attempt at Alcatraz during which famous gangster Doc Barker was shot to death . He spent nearly twenty @-@ two months in solitary confinement as a result but later earned a right to work in the Furniture Shop . He went on trial in 1941 , which brought

Alcatraz into further disrepute as Young 's attorneys claimed he could not be held responsible for his murder as he had endured a " cruel and unusual punishment " prior to it in torment by the prison guards . Young was convicted of manslaughter and his prison sentence only extended by a few years .

= = = Final years = = =

By the 1950s , the prison conditions had improved and prisoners were gradually permitted more privileges such as the playing of musical instruments , watching movies at weekends , painting , and radio use ; the strict code of silence became more relaxed and prisoners were permitted to talk quietly . However , the prison continued to be unpopular on the mainland into the 1950s ; it was by far the most expensive prison institution in the United States and continued to be perceived by many as America 's most extreme jail . In his annual report for 1952 , Director James V. Bennett called for a more centralized institution to replace Alcatraz . A 1959 report indicated that Alcatraz was more than three times more expensive to run than the average US prison ; \$ 10 per prisoner per day compared to \$ 3 in most other prisons . The problem of Alcatraz was exacerbated by the fact that the prison had seriously deteriorated structurally in exposure to the salt air and wind and would need \$ 5 million to deal with it . Major repairs began in 1958 but by 1961 the prison was evaluated by engineers to be a lost cause and Robert F. Kennedy submitted plans for a new maximum @-@ security institution at Marion , Illinois . After the escape from Alcatraz in June 1962 , the prison was the subject of heated investigations , and with the major structural problems and ongoing expense , the prison finally closed on 21 March 1963 . The final Bureau of Prisons report said of Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary : " The institution served an important purpose in taking the strain off the older and greatly overcrowded institutions in Atlanta , Leavenworth and McNeil Island since it enabled us to move to the smaller , closely guarded institution for the escape artists , the big @-@ time racketeers , the inveterate connivers and those who needed protection from other groups . "

Today the penitentiary is a museum and one of San Francisco 's major tourist attractions , attracting some 1 @.@ 5 million visitors annually . Visitors arrive by boat at the port , and are given a tour of the cellhouse and island , and are given a slide show and audio narration with anecdotes from former inmates , guards and rangers on Alcatraz . The atmosphere of the former penitentiary is still considered to be " eerie " , " ghostly " and " chilling " . Protected by the National Park Service and the National Register of Historic Places , the badly eroding buildings of the former prison have been subject to restoration works in recent times and maintained .

= = = Escape attempts = = =

According to the Correctional Officers , once a convict arrived on the Alcatraz wharf , his first thoughts were on how to leave . During its 29 years of operation , the penitentiary claimed that no prisoner successfully escaped . A total of 36 prisoners made 14 escape attempts , two men trying twice ; 23 were caught , six were shot and killed during their escape , two drowned , and five are listed as " missing and presumed drowned " .

The first unsuccessful attempt to escape the prison was made on April 27 , 1936 by Joseph Bowers , who was assigned the duty of burning trash at the incinerator . He tried to escape during duty hours by scaling a chain link fence at the edge of the island . When he was caught in this act and refused orders of the correctional officer located at the West road guard tower to come down he was shot . He was seriously injured in the fall from over 15 m (50 ft) and consequently died .

The first escape attempt to shatter Alcatraz 's reputation as an " escape @-@ proof " prison was made on December 16 , 1937 by Theodore Cole and Ralph Roe . During their work assignment in one of the workshops they cut the flat iron bars of the window and climbed into the bay waters to escape . It was a stormy day and the bay water was highly turbulent . As the escapees were not found , they were declared drowned by the Prison authorities as it was conjectured that they drowned in the bay and their bodies swept out into the sea due to the turbulent bay currents .

===== Battle of Alcatraz =====

The most violent escape attempt occurred on May 2 ? 4 , 1946 , when a failed attempt by six prisoners led to the Battle of Alcatraz , also known as the " Alcatraz Blastout " . It was carried out by six prisoners ; Bernard Coy , Joseph Cretzer , Sam Shockley , Clarence Carnes , Marvin Hubbard and Miran Thompson . They daringly took control of the cell house by overpowering Correctional officers and captured the weapons room and keys to the recreation yard door . Their aim was to escape by boat from the dock , but when they failed to obtain the keys to the outside door , they decided to battle it out . In the fight that ensued they managed to hold two correctional officers hostage whom they eventually killed after two days . Prompted by Shockley and Thompson , Cretzer shot the hostages at very close range . One of the guards , William Miller , succumbed to his injuries while the second guard , Harold Stites , was also killed at the cellhouse . Although Shockley , Thompson , and Carnes returned to their cells , the other three , Coy , Cretzer and Hubbard , persisted with their fight . The U.S. Marines intervened to help the correctional officers and killed the three prisoners . In this battle , apart from the guards and prisoners killed , 17 other guards and one prisoner were also injured . Shockley , Thompson , and Carnes were tried for the killing of the correctional officers . Shockley and Thompson were sentenced to death through the gas chamber , which was carried out at San Quentin in December 1948 . However , Carnes , who was only 19 years of age , was given a second life sentence .

===== " Escape from Alcatraz " =====

On June 11 , 1962 , Frank Morris , John Anglin , and Clarence Anglin carried out one of the most intricate escapes ever devised . Behind the prisoners ' cells in Cell Block B (where the escapees were interned) was an unguarded 3 @-@ foot (0 @.@ 91 m) wide utility corridor . The prisoners chiselled away the moisture @-@ damaged concrete from around an air vent leading to this corridor , using tools such as a metal spoon soldered with silver from a dime and an electric drill improvised from a stolen vacuum cleaner motor . The noise was disguised by accordions played during music hour , and the progress was concealed by false walls which , in the dark recesses of the cells , fooled the guards .

The escape route led up through a fan vent ; the prisoners removed the fan and motor , replacing them with a steel grill and leaving a shaft large enough for a prisoner to enter . Stealing a carborundum abrasive cord from the prison workshop , the prisoners removed the rivets from the grill . In their beds , they placed papier @-@ mâché dummies made with human hair stolen from the barbershop . The escapees also constructed an inflatable raft over many weeks from over 50 stolen raincoats , which they prepared on the top of the cellblock , concealed from the guards by sheets which had been put up over the sides . They escaped through a vent in the roof and departed Alcatraz .

The official investigation by the FBI was aided by another prisoner , Allen West , who was part of the escapees ' group but was left behind . West 's false wall kept slipping so he held it in place with cement , which set . When Morris and the Anglins accelerated the schedule , West desperately chipped away at the wall , but by the time he got out , his companions were gone . Articles belonging to the prisoners , including plywood paddles and parts of the raincoat raft were discovered on nearby Angel Island . The FBI 's investigation from 1962 to December 1979 was finally treated as closed . The official report on the escape concludes that the prisoners drowned in the cold waters of the bay while trying to reach the mainland , it being unlikely that they made it the 1 @.@ 25 miles to shore due to the strong ocean currents and the cold sea water temperatures ranging between 50 and 55 degrees Fahrenheit .

However , The U.S. Marshals Service still list the Anglins and Morris as wanted fugitives and have Wanted Posters for each man . A 2014 study of the ocean currents by scientists at Delft University and the research institute Deltares indicates that a craft leaving Alcatraz at 11 : 30pm on June 11 , 1962 , would most likely have landed just north of the Golden Gate Bridge and indicate that debris would have washed up on Angel Island , consistent with where it was actually found . A 2015

History Channel documentary presented further circumstantial evidence gathered over the years by the Anglin brothers' family, including Christmas cards allegedly sent by the brothers for three years after their escape. It featured an interview with family friend Fred Brizzi, who claimed to have met the brothers in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1975. To support his story, he offered a photograph of two men resembling John and Clarence Anglin, taken, he said, during the encounter. A facial recognition analyst who had examined the photo asserted that the two men were "more than likely" the Anglins. The film also presented an alternate escape theory, involving the use of an electrical cord, which was reported missing from the prison's dock, tied to a passenger ferry that left the island just after midnight on the night of the men's escape.

The 1979 film *Escape from Alcatraz* depicts the escape. It stars Clint Eastwood, Fred Ward, and Jack Thibau as Frank Morris, John Anglin, and Clarence Anglin, respectively. Allen West was played by Larry Hankin; his character's name was changed to Charley Butts. The film implied that the escape had been successful.

= = Administration = =

The prison initially had a staff of 155, including the first warden James A. Johnston and associate warden Cecil J. Shuttleworth, both considered to be "iron men". None of the staff were trained in rehabilitation but highly trained in security. The guards and staff of Alcatraz were subject to varying salaries. A new guard arriving in December 1948 was offered \$ 3024 @. @ 96 per annum, but there was a 6 % deduction for retirement taxes a year amounting to \$ 181 @. @ 50. The guards typically worked 40 @- @ hour weeks; five 8 @- @ hour shifts. Guards who worked between 6 pm and 6 am were given a 10 % increase and guards doing overtime had to be reported and authorized by the warden. Officers generally had to pay 25 cents for meals and were charged \$ 10 to rent an apartment on the island, to include laundry service, although larger families were charged anything from \$ 20 ? 43 a month for larger quarters and charged additional for laundry. In 1960, a Bureau of Prisons booklet revealed that the average prison population between 1935 and 1960 was 263; the highest recorded was 302 in 1937 and the lowest recorded was 222 in 1947.

The main centre for administration was at the entrance to the prison, which included the warden's office. The office contained a desk with radio and telegraph equipment, typewriter, and a telephone. The administrative office section also had the offices of the associate warden and secretary, mail desk, captain's desk, a business office, a clerk's office, an accounting office, a control room which was added with modern technology in 1961, the officer's lounge, armory and vault, and a visitation centre and restrooms.

The basement of Alcatraz prison contained dungeons and the showers. The main stairway to the dungeon lay along Sunrise Alley at the side of A @- @ Block, but the dungeons were also accessible by a staircase in a trapdoor along the corridor of D @- @ Block. All visits to Alcatraz required prior written approval from the warden.

A hospital had originally been installed at Alcatraz during its time as a military prison in the late 19th century. During its time as a Federal Penitentiary it was located above the dining hall on the second floor. Hospital staff were U.S. Public Health Service employees assigned to the Federal Prison Service at Alcatraz. Doctors often lasted fewer than several days or months at Alcatraz, due to the fact that few of them could tolerate the violent inmates who would often terrify them if they failed to be given certain drugs. Prisoners in ill health were often kept in the hospital, most famously, Stroud and Al Capone, who spent years in it.

= = = Security = = =

With the Bureau of Prisons taking over the Alcatraz Island Federal Penitentiary on January 1, 1934, it marked the beginning of a series of measures to strengthen the security of the prison cells to make Alcatraz an "escape @- @ proof" maximum security prison, and also improving the living conditions for the operation and maintenance staff and officers, apart from the prisoners. Modern technological innovations available at the time for enhancing security and comfort were built into the

buildings . Security guard towers were built outside at four strategic locations , cells were rebuilt and fitted with " tool @-@ proof steel cell fronts and locking devices operated from control boxes " , and windows were made secure with iron grills . Electromagnetic metal detectors placed in the entrance of the dining hall and workshops , with remote controlled tear gas canisters at appropriate locations , remote controlled gun galleries with machine gun armed guards were installed to patrol along the corridors . Improvements were made to the toilet and electricity facilities , old tunnels were sealed up with concrete to avoid hiding and escape by prisoners , and substantial changes and improvements were made to the housing facilities of guards , wardens and Captain to live with their families , with quality relative to rank . Homer Cummings , U.S. Attorney General , Sanford Bates , first Director of the Bureau of Prisons , and Warden Johnston collaborated very closely to create " a legendary prison " suited to the times , which resulted in the Alcatraz Island Federal Penitentiary being nicknamed " Uncle Sam 's Devil 's Island . "

Despite Alcatraz being designed to house the " worst of the worst " of criminals who caused problems at other prisons , under the guidelines and regulations set by the strict prison administrators , courts could not direct a prisoner to be directly sent to Alcatraz , however notorious they were for misbehavior and attempted escape from other prisons . Prisoners entering Alcatraz would undergo vigorous research and assessments prior to their arrival . Security in the prison was very tight , with the constant checking of bars , doors , locks , electrical fixtures etc . , to ensure that security hadn 't been broken . During a standard day the prisoners would be counted 13 times , and the ratio of prisoners to guards was the lowest of any American prison of the time . The front door was made of solid steel , virtually impossible for any prisoners to escape through . The island had many guard towers , most of which have since been demolished , which were heavily guarded at various points in the day at times when security may have been breached ; for instance there were guard towers on each of the industry buildings to ensure that inmates didn 't attempt to escape during the work day shifts . The recreation yard and other parts of the prison had a 25 ft fence around it topped with barbed wire , should any inmates attempt to escape during exercise . One former employee of the jail likened his prison job to being a zoo keeper or his old farm job , due to the fact that prisoners were not to be rehabilitated or educated and treated like animals , sending them out to " plough the fields " when some of them worked during the day , and then counting them up and feeding them and so on . He referred to those 4 years of his life working in the prison as a " total waste of his life " . The corridors were regularly patrolled by the guards , with passing gates along them ; the most heavily trafficked was " Broadway " between B and C Block , due to its being the central corridor of the prison and passed not only by guards but other prison workers .

At the end of each 20 minute meal in the dining hall , the forks , spoons and knives were laid out on the table and carefully counted to ensure that nothing had been taken as a potential weapon . In the earlier years as a prison , prisoners were forbidden from talking while eating , but this was later relaxed , provided that the prisoners communicated quietly .

The gun gallery was situated in the Recreation Yard and mounted on one of the dining hall 's exterior walls . There was a metal detector outside of the dining hall for security purposes . The dining hall had tear @-@ gas canisters attached to the rafters of the ceiling which could be activated by remote control , should prisoners riot or attempt to escape . The first warden , James A. Johnston , always entered the dining hall alone and unarmed , due to heavy guarding around him . Several riots did break out in the dining hall during Alcatraz 's history . Those prisoners who were not involved in the fighting hid under the dining hall tables to escape possible gunfire .

= = = Wardens = = =

= = Prison life and the cells = =

An inmate register reveals that there were 1 @, @ 576 prisoners in total held at Alcatraz during its time as a Federal Penitentiary , although figures reported have varied and some have stated 1557 . The prison cells , purposefully designed so that none adjoined an outside wall , typically measured 9

feet (2 @. @ 7 m) by 5 feet (1 @. @ 5 m) and 7 feet (2 @. @ 1 m) high . The cells were primitive with a bed , a desk and a washbasin and toilet on the back wall and few furnishings except a blanket . An air vent , measuring 6 inches (150 mm) by 9 inches (230 mm) , covered by a metal grill , lay at the back of the cells which led into the utility corridors . Prisoners had no privacy in going to the toilet and the toilets would emit a strong stench because they were flushed with salt water . Hot water faucets were not installed until the early 1960s , shortly before closure .

The penitentiary established a very strict regimen of rules and regulations under the title " the Rules and Regulations for the Government and Discipline of the United States Penal and Correctional Institutions " and also a " Daily Routine of Work and Counts " to be followed by the prisoners and also the guards ; copies of these were provided to the prisoners to read and follow . Inmates were basically entitled to food , clothing , shelter , and medical attention . Anything else was seen as a privilege . Inmates were given a blue shirt , grey pants (blue and white in later years) , cotton long underwear , socks and a blue handkerchief ; the wearing of caps was forbidden in the cellhouse . Cells were expected to be kept tidy and in good order . Any dangerous article found in the cells or on inmates such as money , narcotics , intoxicating substances or tools which had the potential to inflict injury or assist in an escape attempt was considered contraband and made the prisoners eligible for disciplinary action . It was compulsory for prisoners to shave in their cells three times a week . Attempting to bribe , intimidate , or assault prison officers was seen as a very serious offense . African @-@ Americans were segregated from the rest in cell designation due to racial abuse being prevalent . Toilet paper , matches , soap , and cleanser were issued to the cells on Tuesdays and Saturdays , and inmates could request hot water and a mop to clean their cells . The bars , windows and floors of the prison were cleaned on a daily basis . In earlier years there was a strict code of silence but by the 1950s this had relaxed and talking was permitted in the cellhouse and dining hall provided conversations were quiet and there was no shouting , loud talking , whistling or singing .

Prisoners would be woken at 6 : 30 am , and sent to breakfast at 6 : 55 . After returning to the cell , inmates then had to tidy their cell and place the waste basket outside . At 7 : 30 work started in the shifts for those privileged enough to do so , punctuated by a whistle , and prisoners would have to go through a metal detector during work shifts . If assigned a job , prisoners had to accept that line of work ; prisoners were not permitted to have money in their possessions but earnings went into a prisoner 's Trust Fund . Some of the prisoners were assigned duties with the guards and foremen in the Laundry , Tailor Shop , Cobblers Shop , Model Shop etc. and in gardening and labor . Smoking , a privilege , was permitted in the workplace providing there wasn 't any hazardous condition , but inmates were not permitted to smoke between the recreation yard and work . Lunch was served at 11 : 20 , followed by a 30 @-@ minute rest in the cell , before returning to work until 16 : 15 . Dinner was served at 16 : 25 and the prisoners would then retire to their cells to be locked in for the night at 16 : 50 , and lights went off at 21 : 30 . After being locked in for the night , 6 guards usually patrolled the four cell blocks . Many prisoners have compared their duration at Alcatraz to hell and would have preferred death to continued incarceration .

Alcatraz Library was located at the end of D @-@ Block . Upon entering Alcatraz , every inmate was given a library card and a catalog of books found in the library ; inmates could place orders by putting a slip with their card in a box at the entrance to the dining hall before breakfast , and the books would be delivered to and from their cell by a librarian . The library , which utilized a closed @-@ stack paging system , had a collection of 10 @, @ 000 to 15 @, @ 000 books , mainly left over from the army days . Inmates were permitted a maximum of three books in addition to up to 12 text books , a Bible , and a dictionary . They were permitted to subscribe to magazines but crime @-@ related pages were torn out and newspapers were prohibited . Sex , crime and violence were censored from all books and magazines , and the library was governed by a chaplain who regulated the censorship and the nature of the reading material to ensure that the material was wholesome . Failure to return books by the date given made the inmate liable to removal of privileges . The average prisoner read 75 to 100 books a year . Every evening , inmates would generally read books loaned from the library and usually an hour or 75 minutes was allocated to the practicing of musical instruments , from the guitar to the accordion . A prison band often practiced in the dining room or

auditorium above it ; Al Capone famously practiced the banjo in the shower block , although most prisoners were limited to playing in their cells alone .

== = Corridors == =

Alcatraz cellhouse had a corridor naming system named after major American streets and landmarks . Michigan Avenue was the corridor to the side of A @-@ Block , and Broadway was the central corridor in which the inmates would assemble as they massed through Times Square (an area with a clock on the wall) , before entering the dining hall for their meals . Broadway separated Block @-@ B and Block @-@ C and prisoners kept along it had the least privacy in the prison . The corridor between Block @-@ C and the library was called Park Avenue . The corridor in D @-@ Block was named Sunset Strip . Gun galleries lay at the end of each block , including the West and East Gun Galleries .

== = A @-@ Block == =

Due to the fact that during the time as a federal penitentiary no inmates were ever permanently held here , A @-@ Block was never modernized , so retained its " flat strap @-@ iron bars , key locks and spiral staircases " from the original military prison . Several inmates , however , were held briefly in A @-@ Block before a hearing or transfer . In the later years of the state penitentiary , the A @-@ Block was mainly used for extra storage and a law library was installed here at one point and it was a place where inmates could type legal documents . A small barber 's shop was located at the end of A @-@ block where inmates would have a monthly haircut .

== = B @-@ Block == =

The majority of the new inmates in Alcatraz were assigned to the second tier of B @-@ Block . They had " quarantine status " for their first three months in confinement in Alcatraz , and were not permitted visitors for a minimum of 90 days . Inmates were permitted one visitor a month , although anybody likely to cause trouble such as registered criminals were barred from visiting . Letters received by inmates were checked by prison staff first , to see if they could decipher any secret messages . Frank Morris and his fellow escapees escaped Alcatraz during the June 1962 escape from Alcatraz by entering a utility corridor behind B @-@ Block .

== = D @-@ Block == =

D @-@ Block gained notoriety as a " Treatment block " for some of the worst inmates , with varying degrees of punishment , including Isolation , Solitary and Strip . Prisoners usually spent anything from 3 to 19 days in Solitary . Prisoners held here would be given their meals in their cells and not permitted to work and only shower twice a week . After a 1939 escape attempt in which Arthur " Doc " Barker was killed , the Bureau of Prisons tightened security in the D @-@ Block . The Birdman of Alcatraz inhabited cell 42 in D @-@ Block in solitary confinement for 6 years .

The worst cells for confinement as a punishment for inmates who stepped out of line were located at the end of D @-@ Block in cells 9 ? 14 , known as " The Hole " . The cells were devoid of light and colder than the rest of the prison , and prisoners sent here were regularly stripped , beaten , and tortured and often starved , forced to sleep on the cold concrete floor wearing nothing but light underwear . In turn , guards were abused , and often had faeces , urine or food thrown at them or were spat at . Inmates held in the hole were limited to just one 10 @-@ minute shower and an hour of exercise in the yard a week . The five cells of " The Hole " had nothing but a sink and toilet and the very worst cell was nicknamed " The Oriental " or " Strip Cell " , the final cell of the block with nothing but a hole in the floor as a toilet , in which prisoners would often be confined naked with nothing else for two days . The guards controlled the flushing of the toilet in that cell . A hatchway in the floor on D @-@ Block also led to the dungeon in the basement which contained several cells .

The worst behaved inmates would be locked inside their cells in the dungeon , chained to the walls . They were given a meager diet of bread and water each day , and one regular meal every three days , although the quantity and duration often varied relative to the extent of the punishment . Denied of proper toilet facilities , they were given a bucket as a toilet , emptied once a week , and stripped and chained to the wall standing at nights ; according to Alvin J. Esau , prisoners in solitary confinement were " placed on a starvation diet and made to stand nine hours each day with hands tied and their feet barely touching the floor . " After completing the punishment in the hole , the prisoner could then return to his cell but be tagged ; a red tag , third grade , denoted a prisoner who was restricted from leaving his cell for perhaps 3 months . At second grade the prisoners could receive letters , and if after 30 days they remained behaved , they would then be restored full prison privileges .

" Its size was approximately that of a regular cell @-@ 9 feet by 5 feet by about 7 feet high . I could just touch the ceiling by stretching out my arm ... You are stripped nude and pushed into the cell . Guards take your clothes and go over them minutely or what few grains of tobacco may have fallen into the cuffs or pockets . There is no soap . No tobacco . No toothbrush , The smell ? well you can describe it only by the word ' stink . ' It is like stepping into a sewer . It is nauseating . After they have searched your clothing , they throw it at you . For bedding , you get two blankets , around 5 in the evening . You have no shoes , no bed , no mattress @-@ nothing but the four damp walls and two blankets . The walls are painted black . Once a day I got three slices of bread @-@ no @-@ that is an error . Some days I got four slices . I got one meal in five days , and nothing but bread in between . In the entire thirteen days I was there , I got two meals ... I have seen but one man get a bath in solitary confinement , in all the time that I have been there . That man had a bucket of cold water thrown over him . " ? Henri Young testifying his experiences in " The Hole " at Alcatraz during his 1941 trial .

= = = Dining = = =

Alcatraz Dining Hall , often referred to as the Mess Hall , is the dining hall where the prisoners and staff ate their meals . It is a long wing on the west end of the Main Cellhouse of Alcatraz , situated in the center of the island . It is connected to the block by a corridor known as " Times Square " , as it passes beneath a large clock approaching the entrance way to the dining hall . This wing includes the dining hall and the kitchen beyond it . On the second floor was the hospital and the auditorium , which was where movies were screened to the inmates at weekends .

Dining hall protocol was a scripted process , including a whistle system to indicate which block and tier of men would move into and out of the hall at any given time , who sat where , where to place hands , and when to start eating . Prisoners would be awakened at 6 : 30 , and sent to breakfast at 6 : 55 . A breakfast menu is still preserved on the hallway board , dated 21 March 1963 . The breakfast menu included assorted dry cereals , steamed whole wheat , a scrambled egg , milk , stewed fruit , toast , bread , and butter . Lunch was served in the dining hall at 11 : 20 , followed by a 30 @-@ minute rest in the cell , before returning to work until 16 : 15 . Dinner was served at 16 : 25 and the prisoners would then retire to their cells at 16 : 50 to be locked in for the night . Inmates were permitted to eat as much as they liked within 20 minutes , provided they left no waste ; waste would be reported and may make the prisoner subject to removal of privileges if they made a habit of it .

Each dining table had benches which held up to six men , although smaller tables and chairs later replaced these which seated four . All of the prison population , including the guards and officials would dine together , thus seating over 250 people . The food served at Alcatraz was reportedly the best in the United States prison system .

= = = Recreation = = =

The Recreation Yard was the yard used by inmates of the prison between 1934 and 1963 . It is located opposite the dining hall south of the end of D @-@ Block , facing the mainland on a raised

level surrounded by a high wall and fence above it . Guard Tower # 3 lay just to the west of the yard . The gun gallery was situated in the yard , mounted on one of the dining hall 's exterior walls .

In 1936 , the previously dirt @-@ covered yard was paved . The yard was part of the most violent escape attempt from Alcatraz in May 1946 when a group of inmates hatched a plot to obtain the key into the recreation yard , kill the tower guards , take hostages , and use them as shields to reach the dock .

Inmates were permitted out into the yard on Saturdays and Sundays and on holidays for a maximum of 5 hours . Inmates who worked seven days a week in the kitchen were rewarded with short yard breaks during the weekdays . Badly behaved prisoners were liable to having their yard access rights taken away from them on weekends . The prisoners of Alcatraz were permitted to play games such as baseball , softball and other sports at these times and intellectual games such as chess . Because of the small size of the yard and the diamond at the end of it , a section of the wall behind the first base had to be padded to cushion the impact of inmates overrunning it . Inmates were provided gloves , bats , and balls , but no sport uniforms . In 1938 , there were four amateur teams , the Bees , Oaks , Oilers , and Seals , named after Minor League clubs , and four league teams named after Major League clubs , the Cardinals , Cubs , Giants , and Tigers . Many of the inmates used weekends in the yards to converse with each other and discuss crime , the only real opportunities they had during the week for a durable conversation .

= = Other buildings = =

= = = Warden 's House = = =

The Warden 's House was the home of the penitentiary 's warden . It is located at the northeastern end of the Main Cellblock , next to Alcatraz Lighthouse . The 3 @-@ floor 15 @-@ room mansion was built in 1921 according to the Golden Gate National Recreational Area signpost , although some sources say it was built in 1926 or 1929 and had 17 or 18 rooms .

Between 1934 and 1963 , the four wardens of Alcatraz resided here , including the first warden , James A. Johnston . A house of luxury , in stark contrast to the jail next to it , the wardens often held lavish cocktail parties here . The signpost at the spot shows a photograph of a trusted inmate doing chores at the house for the warden and that the house had a terraced garden and greenhouse . The mansion had tall windows , providing fine views of San Francisco Bay . Today , the house is a ruin , burned down by Native Americans during the Occupation of Alcatraz on June 1 , 1970 .

= = = Building 64 = = =

Building 64 Residential Apartments was the first building constructed on the island of Alcatraz , intended entirely for the purpose of accommodating the military officers and their families living on the island . Located next to the dock on the southeastern side of the island , below the Warden 's House , the three @-@ story apartment block was built in 1905 on the site of a U.S. Army barracks which had been there from the 1860s . It functioned as the Military Guard Barracks from 1906 until 1933 . One of its largest apartments in the southwest corner was known as the " Cow Palace " and a nearby alleyway was known as " Chinatown " .

= = = Social Hall = = =

The Social Hall , also known as the Officers ' Club , was a social club located on the northwestern side of the island . Located in close proximity to the Power House , water tower and Former Military Chapel (Bachelor Quarters) , it formerly housed the post exchange . The club was a social venue for the Federal Penitentiary workers and their families on the island to unwind after a hard week 's work dealing with America 's most hardened criminals after they 'd been locked up at 17 : 30 . It was burned down by Native Americans during the Occupation of Alcatraz in 1970 , leaving a shell which

still remains .

The club had a small bar , library , large dining and dance floor , billiards table , ping pong table and a two @-@ lane bowling alley , and was the centre of social life on the island for the employees of the penitentiary . It regularly hosted dinners , bingo events , and from the 1940s onwards showed movies every Sunday night after they had been shown to the inmates during the day on Saturday and Sunday . The club was responsible for organizing numerous special events on the island (held either in the hall or the Parade Grounds) and the fundraising associated with it , anything from ice cream and watermelon feasts to Halloween fancy dress and Christmas parties .

= = = Power House = = =

The Power House is located on the northwest coast of Alcatraz Island . It was constructed in 1939 for \$ 186 @, @ 000 as part of a \$ 1 @. @ 1 million modernization scheme which also included the water tower , New Industries Building , officers quarters and remodeling of the D @-@ block . The white powerhouse smokestack and lighthouse were said to give an " appearance of a ship 's mast on either side of the island " . A sign reading " A Warning . Keep Off . Only Government permitted within 200 yards " lay in front of the powerhouse to deter people landing on the island at the point .

Between 1939 and 1963 it supplied power to the Federal Penitentiary and other buildings on the island . The powerhouse had a tower duty station which was guarded with a " 30 @-@ caliber Winchester rifle with 50 rounds of ammunition , a 1911 semiautomatic pistol with three seven @-@ round magazines , three gas grenades , and a gas mask . "

= = = Alcatraz Water Tower = = =

The Water Tower is located on the northwestern side of the island , near Tower No. 3 , beyond the Morgue and Recreation Yard . The water tank is situated on six cross @-@ braced steel legs submerged in concrete foundations .

As Alcatraz had no water supply of its own , it had to import it from the mainland , brought by tug and barge . During the island 's military years , there were in @-@ ground water tanks and water tanks were situated on the roof of the citadel . The water tower was built in 1940 ? 41 by the Federal Bureau of Prisons , after the island received a government renovations grant to supply the majority of the island 's fresh water .

It is the tallest building on the island , at a height of 94 feet (29 m) with a volume of 250 @, @ 000 US gallons (950 kL) gallons of fresh water . It was used to store potable water for drinking , water for firefighting , and water for the island 's service laundry facility .

= = = Model Industries Building = = =

The Model Industries Building is a three / four @-@ story building on the northwest corner of Alcatraz Island . This building was originally built by the U.S. military and was used as a laundry building until the New Industries Building was built as part of a redevelopment program on Alcatraz in 1939 when it was a federal penitentiary . As part of the Alcatraz jail , it held workshops for inmates to work in .

On January 10 , 1935 , the building shifted to within 2 @. @ 5 feet from the edge of the cliff following a landslide caused by a severe storm . The warden at the time , James A. Johnston , proposed extend the seawall next to it and asked the Bureau for \$ 6500 to fund it ; he would later claim to dislike the building because it was irregularly shaped . A smaller , cheaper riprap was completed by the end of 1935 . A guard tower and a catwalk from Hill Tower was added to the roof of the Industries Building in June 1936 and the building was made secure with bars from old cells to bar the windows and grill the roof ventilators and to prevent inmates from escaping from the roof . It ceased use as a laundry in 1939 when it was moved to the upper floor of the New Industries Building . Today the building is heavily rusted after decades of exposure to the salt air and wind , and neither the guard tower on top of the building or the Hill Tower still exist .

== New Industries Building ==

The New Industries Building was constructed in 1939 for \$ 186 @, @ 000 as part of a \$ 1 @. @ 1 million modernization scheme which also included the water tower , power house , officers ' quarters and remodeling of the D @- @ block .

The ground floor of the two @- @ story 306 ft long building contained a clothing factory , dry cleaning plant , furniture plant , brush factory , and an office , where prisoners of the federal penitentiary could work for money . They earned a small wage for their labour which was put into an account , known as a Prisoner 's Trust Fund , which would be given to them upon leaving Alcatraz . They made items such as gloves , furniture mats , and army uniforms . The laundry room occupied the entire upper floor , the largest in San Francisco at the time . Each window has 9 panes and there are 17 bays on each floor on either side .

== Notable inmates ==

== Legends ==

Alcatraz has been cited as one of the most " haunted " places in America . The Native Americans mentioned the evil spirits they purportedly encountered on the island long before it became a military prison . Mark Twain visited it , found the atmosphere of the island eerie , and described it as " being as cold as winter , even in the summer months " , and The Washington Post has also claimed that Alcatraz is a place " where visitors can sense the dread of past inhabitants still trapped in the atmosphere . " The alleged haunting of the prison has been documented in numerous paranormal television series . Officials for Alcatraz have dismissed the reports of ghosts at Alcatraz as nonsense and deny their existence ; an official for Alcatraz said in 1994 , " These ridiculous ghost stories will stop tourists from visiting . And how can these people say they heard canaries ? We don 't have any birds in here . "

== In popular culture ==