

Moments in Time

SAUSALITO HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER FALL 2008

FORT BAKER AND POINT CAVALLO

Battery Cavallo

Hidden Away At Fort Baker

Point Cavallo, the chosen title for the National Park Service's newly-restored historical enclave, lodge and conference center at Fort Baker, is more than just a colorful Spanish place name for choice real estate overlooking the Golden Gate. And Battery Cavallo is more than the obsolete gun battery poised at the tip of the point, a flat bluff forming the eastern flank of Horseshoe Cove. In fact, Battery Cavallo, once projected to be key to an intricate defense system protecting San Francisco Bay, occupies a singular place in American military history. It's a pristine example of the Army's post-Civil War move from hulking, multi-tiered brick forts (think Fort Sumter or San Francisco's Fort Point) to simple, low-slung, earthwork fortifications. And it's one of very few survivors of what military historians call "The Plan of 1870"—a short-lived scheme of coastal fortifications that became victim to rapidly changing military technology.

Why, of the many earthen fortifications built around the country in the early 1870s—most subsequently obliterated by later construction—has Battery Cavallo remained virtually intact? The primary reason is that it's been largely left alone, never armed and utilized as its designers originally intended. Due to funding cutbacks in Washington, it was never fully completed. And, 20 years later, new developments in American long-range military planning in the late 19th century passed it over for modernization. Evolving military strategy dictating upgraded installations at Lime Point Military Reservation took place all around it without substantially altering it. Battery Cavallo today, hidden away under an overlay of underbrush, defaced with graffiti and scarred by generations of off-road vehicles, has remained structurally unscathed in the face of a hundred years of "progress."

The Spanish, during their colonial reign in Northern California, had little interest in defending the entrance to what was to become San Francisco Bay. The thinking was, why worry about lands at the far reaches of the empire? The Mexicans, in their turn, were content to leave their primitive military installation at El Presidio in disrepair and unde-

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PHOTO: GGNRA/NPS ARCHIVES

Troops still living in tents around 1905 at Fort Baker actually look to be in pretty good spirits: sunshine, a letter from home and a cigarette!

Morale and the Military At Fort Baker and Sausalito

The handsome Colonial Revival buildings that encircle the parade ground at Fort Baker today, built between 1902 and 1910, were inspired by a progressive vision of what military housing could and should be at the dawn of the 20th century. The investment in better housing for soldiers was one of the improvements to the military that followed in the wake of the Civil War. The terrible conditions for men in the armed forces during and after the war affected post-war enlistment for decades. As a consequence, for the remainder of the 19th century, the US Army had to revive itself and create incentives for enlistment.

The Lime Point Military Reservation, renamed Fort Baker in 1897, was one of the first complexes in the nation designed to improve the standard of living for both enlisted men and officers. On acreage originally part of the vast Mexican land grant owned by the founder of Sausalito, William Richardson, the US Army set out to design a healthy, morale-supporting environment strikingly different from the inhumane living arrangements characteristic of pre-20th century military installations.

Frontier posts suffered the worst conditions. The barracks

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Morale (continued from page 1)

were dark, poorly ventilated and often damp. Several men might share one bug-infested bunk and each was lucky to bathe once a month. There was no electricity, running water or separate bathrooms. The food was poor and frequently in short supply. As a result, the well-being of recruits, who had often enlisted because they had no other choice in life, was further compromised.

The need for housing near Lime Point had not been a concern when the property was first purchased in 1866; by 1897, however, the number of Coast Artillery Corpsmen manning the installations there was on the increase. The first move of recruits to the Horseshoe Cove area was in the summer of 1897 when Battery I of the Third Artillery moved from Angel Island to Fort Baker. A temporary tent encampment was set up along the marsh at the head of the Cove (there was as yet no sea wall or land fill). By fall, Brigadier General “Pecos Bill” Shafter had decided to establish permanent residence at the site for his troops, and two, unused two-story wooden barracks were barged over from the Presidio. The nascent community was further augmented by a guardhouse, corral and stable. The only other Fort Baker accommodations were located west of Horseshoe Cove (under the present north end of the Golden Gate Bridge): storehouses, offices and barracks-like quarters for construction crews.

For the average enlisted, unmarried 20-year-olds at Fort Baker, the leap in living standards between 1900 and 1910 was dramatic. Now each recruit had a real bed with a mattress, proper ventilation, clean running water and modern toilet and shower facilities. The upstairs dormitories were spacious, with large windows to let in fresh air; downstairs, there were tailor and barber shops, a large kitchen, a communal living area and dining hall.

In adjacent buildings, even more improvements began to enrich soldiers’ lives. With increased wages, they could purchase beer and dry goods at a new post exchange. There was a fully-equipped gymnasium, with a bowling alley and, to encourage further education among the recruits, study and reading rooms.

The officers lived in individual, large duplexes on Murray Circle, the graceful arc road around the parade ground, and



This is a 1906 photograph of the Fort Baker parade ground with Coast Artillery troops in formation and, around the perimeter, new married officers quarters built in the Colonial Revival tradition.

PHOTO: GGNRA/NPS ARCHIVES

non-commissioned officers lived off the main drive. This arrangement, allowing married officers to lodge their families on the base, was another major change designed to enhance morale at Fort Baker and other military outposts. The comfortable design of these buildings, now adapted for use at the Lodge at Point Cavallo, was testament to the seriousness of the Army’s new commitment to quality-of-life.

Through World War I and the decades following, Fort Baker continued as a strong example of enlightened military planning. Baseball and football teams brought recruits into informal contact with the surrounding communities and helped overcome rigid separation of civilian and military life. Then in 1941, a pre-Pearl Harbor surge in military recruitment aimed at boosting defenses at the Golden Gate created a whole new challenge: the need to provide for the hundreds, and then thousands, of men flooding into the military in response to heightened fears of a spreading global war.

In February 1941, the Sausalito Service Men’s Club, chaired by John B. Ehlen, responded to the situation. In order to “care for the needs of the 3000 soldiers soon to be in our midst,” Ehlen declared, “it is our community responsibility . . . to make a worthy contribution to the support of morale.” Prompted by Major Allison at Fort Baker, who was concerned about soldiers getting into trouble due to improper off-base amusement, and worried about “work overload for the Sausalito police department and courts,” the Service Men’s Club set out to lease the abandoned South School site at North and Third Streets for the purpose of creating a recreation center.

Morale (Continued on Page 3)

With a call to “provide wholesome recreation for draftees and others in the service of their country,” a countywide effort was launched. As reported in the February 6, 1941, *Sausalito News*, rugs, chesterfields, easy chairs, tables and floor lamps were solicited. A whist party in the Central School auditorium was planned to raise funds, with the Lions and the 20–30 Club participating in the effort. By April, the center’s opening was advertised for Army, Navy, Marine and Coast Guard recruits. Most importantly, according to the *News*, “If you are a single girl, you owe it to your country to be at the opening. . . . for those who will dance all evening with the boys in uniform, it’s free.” The musical ensemble included electric guitar, accordion, saxophone, drums, piano and harmonica, and one tap dancer!

The Service Men’s Club soon recognized the need to expand the popular recreation center at the old South School and requested \$10,000 in federal funds through a local congressman. An official hostess was hired, Mrs. Rose Findley, called “Mother” or “Aunt Rose” by the boys who spent idle hours playing checkers, monopoly, writing letters on embossed stationery and playing the juke box when they could spare a nickel.

According to *Sausalito News* headlines on July 10, 1941, Washington ordered the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which had been paying hostess Findley, to discontinue her work at the recreation center due to lack of funds. An appeal was made to the local USO for funds, but the center did not meet the qualifying number of 5000 users. The local 20-30 Club, which had raised money for the National USO, consequently decided to withdraw its support. Meanwhile locally raised funds paid Mrs. Findley to keep the heavily used center running.

The community stewed for three months awaiting word on federal funds and trying to pay Mrs. Findley. Then, on October 2, 1941, the *News* in an extra bold headline announced that “\$20,480 in Federal Grant Money was approved for the Service Men’s Club,” and almost simultaneously, the WPA restored Findley to her hostess position.

The crisis that had nearly closed the center, “one of the very first such recre-

The South School, located on North Street between 3rd and 4th, was built in 1903 and used by generations of school children. After serving during WWII as the Service Men’s Center, it was torn down in 1958. The site now contains a park and tennis court.

ation centers in the United States and as such a model for other clubs over a wide area,” had been overcome, and plans moved swiftly ahead to remodel the old South School as “a permanent quarters for the southern Marin service men.” During reconstruction, the recreation center temporarily moved to the recently abandoned Northwestern Pacific Railroad train depot building at Bridgeway and Litho. The depot site was hosed out by the Sausalito fire department and volunteers moved all the furniture from the South School, making sure to maintain an at-home environment for the service men during the reconstruction. Less than two months later, when the center moved back, the former South School had been “transformed into one of the finest clubhouses in the bay region.”

In the meantime, the town of Sausalito itself was transformed by the war effort, both by the military activity at Lime Point and by the Marinship yard on the northern waterfront where 93 liberty ships and tankers were built between 1942 and 1945. For a brief period, the town’s population grew to 35,000—changing the face of many hillside homes, where second units were built to house the overflow, and creating Marin City.

The challenge to keep morale up during the war was met by the armed forces, by local communities, by organizations and individuals around the country. Whether knitting wool socks, rolling bandages for the Red Cross, welding ship hulls, painting inspirational ship bow art, or playing dance music at the Service Men’s Club and sending Bundles for Britain through the newly-formed Salvage Shop—Sausalitans kept spirits lifted—one person at a time.

—Margaret Badger



PHOTO: SHS COLLECTION

Battery Cavallo (continued from page 1)

fended. But when California became part of the United States in 1850, an extensive program of harbor fortifications was launched. It envisioned an interactive network of traditional pre-Civil War masonry forts—one on either side of the narrow straits just then becoming known as the Golden Gate and others at Alcatraz, Angel Island, Yerba Buena Island, and Point San Jose. On the south shore of the Gate, an imposing three-story brick structure at Fort Point was completed in 1861. At Lime Point, on the north shore, the projected fortification was also to be concentrated in one spot: 109 cannon in a two-story masonry structure, a somewhat smaller version of Fort Point.

But at Lime Point, title to the building site, unlike that to the federally-controlled lands at the other proposed sites, was not immediately available. William Richardson, holder of the vast Mexican land grant known as Rancho Sausalito (including Lime Point) was the appointed Captain of the Port of San Francisco and an ambitious maritime entrepreneur who aimed to build a personal fortune by controlling the shipping lanes through the Gate. But Richardson encountered hard times. After his shipping empire sank into bankruptcy in the 1850s, the bulk of his land grant passed to San Francisco lawyer and land speculator William Throckmorton, who drove a hard bargain, delaying the government's purchase of Lime Point (at a cost of \$125,000) for 11 years.

Once having gained title, the Army Corps of Engineers set to work, blasting away at the hard rock at the foot of Lime Point. One million cubic yards needed to be carved out of a 250-foot-high cliff, the goal being a four-acre plateau costing the daunting sum, in 1870s dollars, of an estimated \$3 million.

By that time, however, lessons learned during the Civil War had given rise to second thoughts. While monolithic forts like that at Fort Sumter had been easy enemy targets, low-profile earthen works had proved to be inexpensive, easy to build and repair, and, because their profile was low and their firepower dispersed, far less vulnerable. Facing this reality, the Army did an about face. Military planners switched their support to "The Plan of 1870," which specified that each pair of guns should be separated from the next by earthwork berms called "traverses." Inside these would be masonry magazines and store rooms, connected by brick-lined tunnels for moving troops and supplies.

The Bay Area's already completed fortifications designed around the pre-Civil War model were deemed obsolete. At Lime Point, excavation work was halted, and five sites were chosen for "earthwork barbettes," among them Battery Cavallo. Begun in 1872, it was considered particularly important due to its strategic location at the tip of Point Cavallo. Its guns could cover not only the Golden Gate, but intersect with those at batteries inside the bay. It could also protect the vital Richardson's Bay anchorage off Sausalito.

Battery Cavallo was originally designed to mount the most powerful guns on the Pacific Coast. It had other features, too, which in part accounts for the fact that it was never replicated elsewhere in the country. John Martini, retired National Park Service historian, has written: "Battery Cavallo was to be unique in several respects. Instead of arranging its cannon in a straight line, the Army Engineers designed Cavallo in the shape of a broad arrowhead pointing into San Francisco Bay. They also provided the battery with a high earthen parapet on its landward side, creating a totally enclosed fort. In order to protect the battery from raiding parties, the designers provided it with an easily defended gate called a 'sally port' and steps for riflemen to use in case of assault."

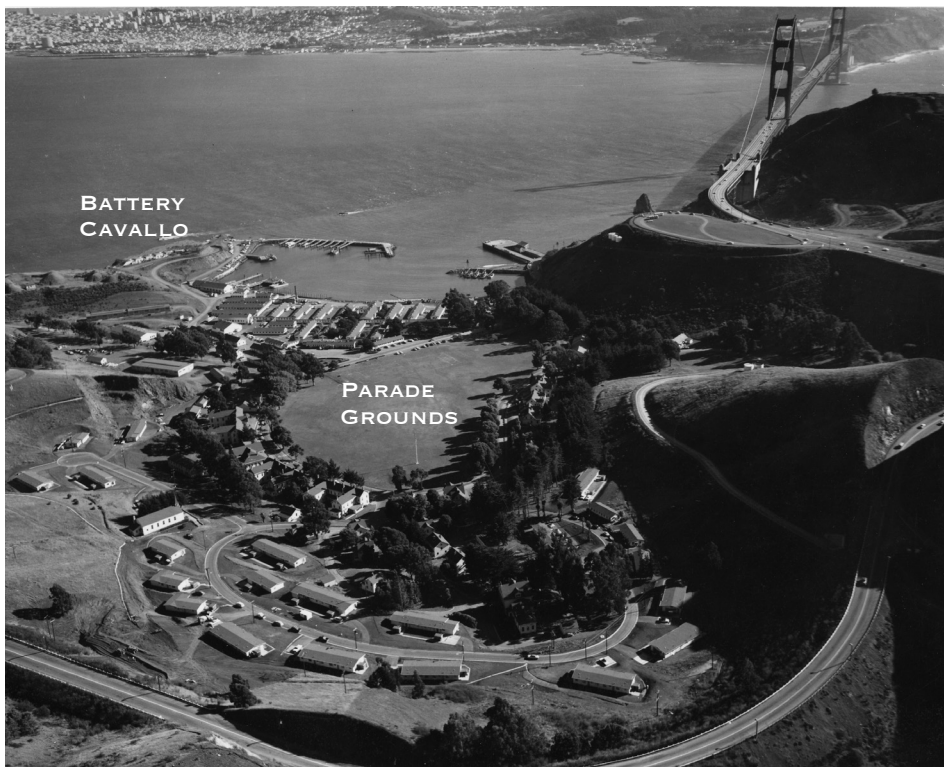
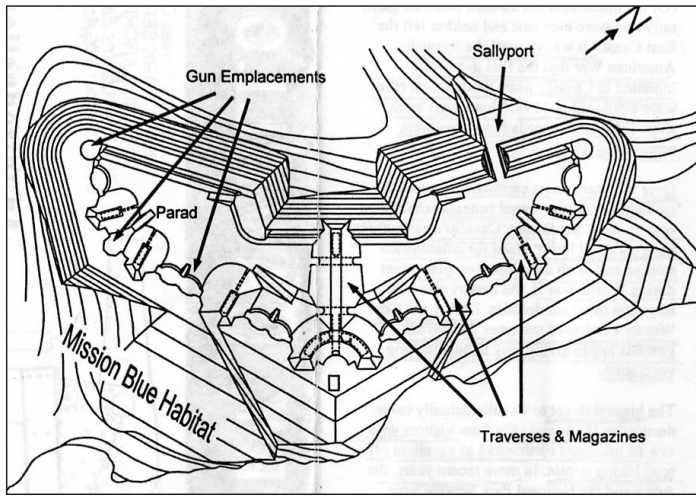


PHOTO: GGNRA/NPS ARCHIVES

Aerial view of Fort Baker showing the location of Battery Cavallo, 1960.

Battery Cavallo (Continued on Page 5)



Battery Cavallo

By 1875, the bulk of the work at Cavallo was finished, at a reported cost of \$107,825.17, with only the arrival of its artillery needed to complete the project. But once again, decision-makers in Washington, impressed with innovative military advances coming out of the Franco-Prussian War, reversed themselves, adopting a “wait and see” policy with regard to new earthwork projects around the country and cutting Lime Point’s budget for 1875–76 to a miserly \$20,000. On June 30, 1976, fortification works nationwide came to a screeching halt.

For the next 20 years, Lime Point’s five earthen batteries lay dormant—Cavallo 95% complete—while deferred maintenance and the indigenous gophers of the Marin Headlands took their toll.

The 1890s saw a dramatic shift in direction. What’s known in Army circles as the “Endicott Era” was launched when a task force led by Secretary of War William Endicott recommended a bold program of modernization of the country’s coastal defenses. Earthwork projects begun in the 1870s, including almost all those around San Francisco Bay, were leveled and more up-to-date forms of fortification, employing new armor-piercing ordnance and shielded by steel armor-plated masonry, were put in their place. In many respects, this period is regarded by military historians as the “Golden Age” of coast artillery in the United States. But while earthwork projects were leveled and new Endicott batteries were introduced at Lime Point, Battery Cavallo (except for three short-lived gun emplacements triggered by fears of a Spanish incursion during the Spanish-American War) survived the Endicott years unscathed. Only the importing of additional earth during this period, piled up in front of its traverses, effected some change at Cavallo, altering the battery’s footprint from more rectangular to more muchroom-like shapes.

Another few decades of neglect ensued. During World

War II, Cavallo hosted anti-aircraft emplacements and functioned as a central magazine facility for Fort Baker, which meant that it was kept clear of all flammable vegetation. But the post-war years introduced another long stretch of dormancy, lasting to the present. And the neatly manicured look of the war years gave way to weeds.

Historian Erwin Thompson, in his landmark *Historic Resource Study: Seacoast Fortifications San Francisco Harbor*, writes: “Of all the works constructed in the 1870s, the Cavallo Battery was the most handsome architecturally and is the best surviving example of the post-Civil War earthworks. . . . It is recommended that the necessary restoration of the parapets be carried out and that the battery be preserved”

Meanwhile, directly in front of what were once Battery Cavallo’s gun emplacements, a rare habitat of the endangered Mission Blue butterfly has developed. The Army and the National Park Service are currently working together to restrict access to the site and to carry out preservation plans for both the butterflies and the battery.

—Doris Berdahl

REVISED BOARD MEETING POLICY

As announced at the last General Meeting, Sausalito Historical Society board meetings are open to all members. Up to four members per meeting may address the board at the beginning of the meeting for five minutes each. Originally, we required at least 24 hours notice for making a request to speak, but in order to allow time to prepare accurate agendas, we have expanded that deadline to at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting. Requests must be phoned into the Society’s phone message machine at 289-4117. The board will decide whether the issue will be placed on a subsequent meeting agenda and the presenter will be notified.

Any Society member may attend a board meeting as an observer while the board carries out its business. Participation in the business meeting is limited to board members.

Larry Clinton, President

HELP US KEEP IN TOUCH

If you’d like to be updated more frequently on Society news and activities, please send your name, e-mail address and phone number to: info@sausalitohistoricalociety.org. We promise not to share your information with anyone else, and not to inundate you with spam!

JOHN A. PULLIN 1925-2008



John Pullin dressed to lead his Saturday morning Marinship Historical Walking Tour.

John A. Pullin, long time friend and consultant to the Sausalito Historical Society, the Richardson's Bay Maritime Association and the staff at the Bay Model, died on July 20, 2008. John was the go-to expert on details of life, equipment and lore at Marinship during World War II and regularly shared his knowledge during his historic, bi-monthly Saturday walking tours.

John was a native San Franciscan who at the time of his death was living in the family home where he grew up. He and his wife, Joan, also lived for several years on their boat in Sausalito and San Rafael, a period he always recalled fondly.

At the outbreak of World War II, John signed up to work at the Marinship boatyard as a carpenter. He commuted from San Francisco on a bus that stopped across from his home and dropped him off at the facility. As one of the youngest workers, John relished being on the inside of the historic wartime

effort and welcomed the \$1.35 hourly wage he received for the swing shift (almost triple the going wage in San Francisco).

Years later in 1995, when John had retired from a career as a truck repair foreman at the US Postal Service, he decided to revisit the Marinship site. "I saw a newspaper notice about a walking tour of Sausalito's waterfront, and I told my wife 'Maybe they'll mention where I worked.'" He observed that other tour participants had a lot of questions about the war period and his own recollections came back easily. After additional inquiry into Marinship history, John and the Bay Model volunteer coordinator agreed to set up a bi-monthly, Saturday morning "Marinship Historical Walking Tour." For over a decade, until shortly before he died, John continued to delight visitors with his detailed knowledge and personal anecdotes.

For example, as reported in a 2005 article in *Marinscope*, John recounted: "During the era of Marinship's operation there was a working whiskey distillery immediately across Bridgeway. To prevent losing its employees to the shipbuilding concern across the street, the distillery found it expedient to look the other way when its employees walked out the door with a pint of whiskey at the end of every shift."

In 1997, John earned the "Volunteer of the Year" award from the staff at the Bay Model. He was a "well loved guy—a very special person" who became a celebrity in his own right, much sought after by outside groups. He had a glint in his eye and never missed a chance for a joke or, for that matter, a good burrito at his favorite restaurant in San Rafael.

In recent years John developed a close relationship with the Sausalito Historical Society as well as the Richardson's Bay Maritime Association (RBMA). In 2004, John offered a Marinship tour as an auction item for the SHS fundraiser. He helped write the captions for the Holman Exhibit of Marinship Photographs in 2007–8, and he donated a one-of-a-kind Marinship document to the permanent collection. He assisted the RBMA in identifying important historic building remnants in the present day Marinship. But most of all, John was a reminder to all of us that having a passionate interest, a sense of fun and an appreciation of other people makes for very good times. We'll miss you, John!

John is survived by his wife Joan of 45 years, his brother Tony, son John and daughter-in-law Lynette, grandsons Jeremy, Jesse, and Justin. Also his granddaughters by marriage Dayan, Ashley, and Sierra and great-grandsons Tryston, Jayce and Aiden.

AN ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE MADE OF AN EVENT TO CELEBRATE JOHN THIS FALL AT THE BAY MODEL. PLEASE CALL: 331-3871

SAUSALITO HISTORICAL SOCIETY SPECIAL EVENTS FOR 2008–2009

THE SAUSALITO WATERFRONT: Old Fort Baker to Gate Six

In a 2008–2009 series, the Historical Society will host events that explore the history, diversity and resources found along the Sausalito waterfront. Members will receive a post card announcement of each event in advance. The first four events are the following:

AN EVENING AT OLD FORT BAKER WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2008, 5-8PM FUND RAISER

Old Fort Baker Tour—5:00 pm

Meet at the 'SHS Tour' table on the parade ground. Retired National Park Service ranger and historian John Martini will lead guests on a tour of the long-closed Battery Cavallo built in the 1870s.

Reception at Cavallo Point—6:30pm

The reception will be held upstairs in restored building #602.

Tour and Reception	\$50 per person
Limited to fifty SHS members only	
Reception Only	\$30 per person
Non-members welcome	

Send your checks made payable to the Sausalito Historical Society to SHS, P.O. Box 352, Sausalito, CA 94966. Please include your name, phone number, e-mail, and guest names, and indicate if you are a SHS member. Call 415-289-4117 with questions only.

SCHOONMAKER: ABOARD THE GAS LIGHT AND BEACH RECEPTION SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2008

Guests will board the historic gaff-rigged Scow Schooner, *Gas Light*, in Schoonmaker Marina and hear legendary sailor and boatbuilder, Billy Martinelli, talk about his recollections of the history of the site. Then former Sausalito resident and international architect, Peter Calthorpe, will discuss the buildings he designed for the property in the 1980s. Reception follows on Schoonmaker Beach. Reservations required. (See above.)

Talk and reception	\$20 per person
Limited to fifty SHS members only.	
Reception Only	\$10 per person
Non-members welcome	

LITERARY SAUSALITO: A HISTORICAL TOUR FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2008

Co-hosted by the Sausalito Historical Society and the Sausalito Women's Club at The Sausalito Women's Club, 120 Central Avenue, Sausalito.

A fast-paced evening of readings from the works of writers who have lived in or written about Sausalito, including Jack London, Evan Connell, Shel Silverstein, W.R. Hearst, Gina Berriault, Alan Watts, Leland Lewis, Sterling Hayden, and Ernest Gann. A special appearance by a current noted local author such as Anne Lamott, Isabel Allende or Amy Tan is planned. There is no charge for this evening.

No host bar and desserts.

This event is co-chaired by Susan Frank (SHS) and Ann Arnott (SWC). Call SHS at 289-4117 with questions.

INDUSTRIAL CENTER BUILDING THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2008

This walking tour of the building and preview of the holiday open studios will be followed by a reception where resident artists will share their experiences of working in one of the original Marinship buildings. No charge. Details on post card invitation sent in November.



The Gas Light under sail on Richardson's Bay.

PHOTO: COURTESY GAS LIGHT TOURS WEBSITE

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Since being elected President, I've come to realize what a large set of shoes the previous board left for us to fill. Congratulations to those who served the Society so well . . . most for as long as six years!

The new board is planning events for the year (see announcements on page 7), installing new software that will allow users to search our collection on computer, and tackling ongoing activities such as organizing/managing our collection and making decisions on accessioning. We always welcome help with our events (mailing invitations, contributing food and drink for receptions, and set up/clean up) and with ongoing projects.

Soon, we hope to begin inputting our card catalog data into computer files. If you are willing to get trained on new software and help, please let us know! To make the new files accessible, we are looking for a computer system with the following specifications: A desktop PC running Windows XP on a Pentium 2.0 Ghz or better microprocessor with at least 512 Mb of RAM, a CD/DVD burner, and a color flat screen monitor 17" or larger. In-kind donations of computer equipment to the Society, a non-profit public benefit 501 (c) 3 corporation, are tax-deductible (check with your tax advisor).

We also need more people on the Accessions Committee to review donated materials for inclusion in the collection as well as more docents to staff the Phil Frank History and Research Room. If any of these activities sound interesting to you—or if there is anything else you'd like to help out with—let us know! Call the society at 289-4117 or e-mail us at: info@sausalitohistoricalsociety.org.

—*Larry Clinton*, President

SAUSALITO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

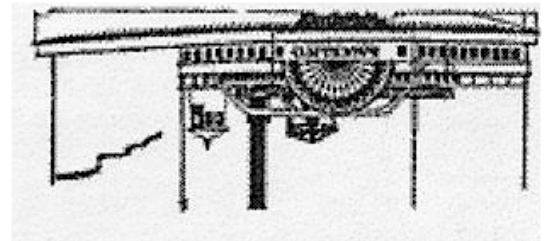
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Lime Point and Fort Baker Time Line

- 1775 Don Juan Manuel de Ayala's ship *San Carlos* becomes first European vessel to enter San Francisco Bay from the sea, dropping anchor one mile north of Horseshoe Cove and remaining there for a month.
- 1776 Spanish establish small military garrison at Yerba Buena, directly across Golden Gate from Lime Point.
- 1821 Mexico wins independence from Spain; gains sovereignty over former Spanish holdings in California, including Lime Point.
- 1838 William Richardson is awarded a 19,571-acre Mexican land grant, including Lime Point, which he calls Rancho Sausalito.
- 1850 California becomes part of United States; President Fillmore identifies Lime Point as site of future military fortification to be called Lime Point Military Reservation.
- 1855 Richardson goes bankrupt; sells bulk of Rancho Sausalito to lawyer and land speculator Samuel Throckmorton.
- 1866 Following lengthy court battle, federal government acquires title to Lime Point; plans multi-storied masonry fort similar to already completed Fort Point.
- 1867 Work buildings and a wharf, called Engineer's Camp, are constructed near west end of Horseshoe Cove in preparation for blasting at Lime Point for the new fort's foundations.
- 1870 Construction commences on road from Horseshoe Cove over Lime Point Ridge to Gravelly Beach (now Kirby Cove), to become known as Conzelman Road.
- 1871 Decision is made to replace Fort Point model with the so-called Plan of 1870s; work begins on five dispersed, low-profile earthwork batteries at Point Cavallo, Lime Point Ridge, Gravelly Beach, Point Diablo and Point Bonita.
- 1876 Funding for earthwork-style fortifications is discontinued nationwide; all military building activity at Lime Point ceases for almost two decades.
- 1883 Lime Point fog signal is built.
- 1893 Modernization period known as the "Endicott Era" begins at Lime Point, leveling and replacing 1870s earth works (except Cavallo) and introducing five new batteries: Spenser, Kirby, Duncan, Orlando Wagner and George Yates.
- 1897 Lime Point Military Reservation is formally named Fort Baker, honoring a former US Senator and Civil War Colonel who died at the Battle of Balls Bluff, Virginia; first troops of Coast Artillery Corps are moved from Angel Island to Fort Baker that summer.
- 1900 Plans are laid out for Fort Baker parade ground and Murray Circle, the ring road designed to encircle it.
- 1901–05 Construction begins on road from Sausalito along Fort Baker's east shore (East Road), marking beginning of public access to Fort Baker; new Endicott-type batteries are constructed at Point Bonita: Edwin Guthrie, Samuel Rathbone, Patrick O'Rourke, Mendell and Alexander.
- 1901–10 Eleven wood-frame structures, built in the Colonial Revival style, are constructed around Murray Circle (officer and enlisted men housing and administration buildings); a variety of service structures are added later around the periphery.
- 1903–09 Marsh at the head of Horseshoe Cove is filled in to create parade ground; lawn is planted and trees are imported to provide windbreak.

- 1904 Fort Barry (including buildings presently occupied by the Marin Headlands Center for the Arts and the GGNRA's Marin Headlands Visitor Center) is established to the west of Fort Baker.
- By 1911 All four companies of the Coast Artillery Corps are now garrisoned at Fort Baker: the 32nd, 68th, 61st, and 148th.
- 1916–18 Tunnel is constructed under ridge west of Fort Baker to connect Baker with the head of Rodeo Valley and Fort Barry.
- 1917 By United States entry into World War I, most of Fort Baker's guns are considered of secondary importance in defense of San Francisco Bay.
- 1935 Use of depression-era WPA and CCC workers introduce many new site improvements.
- 1937 Upon completion of Golden Gate Bridge, the new Sausalito Lateral (Alexander Avenue) offers alternate means of vehicular access to Fort Baker; as war clouds gather, Army begins to update existing seacoast defenses, including those at Baker.
- 1937–41 Mine depot is constructed at Fort Baker's Horseshoe Cove, designed to plant and maintain minefields outside the Golden Gate.
- 1941 Large station hospital is constructed at Fort Baker to relieve pressure on the Presidio's Letterman Hospital; by end of World War II, hospital complex contains 45 buildings (demolished in 1981).
- 1940–44 A number of wartime Army units are assigned to Forts Baker, Barry and Cronkhite; several gun batteries are updated.
- 1945 With the arrival of peace, the disarming of San Francisco harbor defenses begins; by 1946, all coast artillery weapons at Fort Baker are deactivated.
- 1948 Army turns over operation of the underwater mine defense mission to Navy; departure of Mine Detachment Artillery School in 1949 marks end of all coast defense functions at Fort Baker; during Cold War, all Nike emplacements at Lime Point are assigned to Forts Barry and Cronkhite.
- 1959 Additional military family housing is constructed behind Murray Circle (21 Capehart duplexes); Baker acts as administrative headquarters of the 91st (Reserve) Infantry Division and various antiaircraft missile units for much of Cold War era.
- 1972 Golden Gate National Recreational Area is created, including all of Lime Point; National Park Service takes over open space management throughout most of Marin Headlands while Army continues to occupy and administer Fort Baker; in 1985, 258 additional acres of open space are transferred to Park Service administration.
- 1990 US Coast Guard constructs new facilities for its Golden Gate Station at Horseshoe Cove; Bay Area Discovery Museum begins operation in former commissary and warehouse complex.
- 1995 Army announces its intent to relinquish jurisdiction of remaining acreage at Fort Baker to National Park Service.