

Later Military Prison (1908 – 1933)

The use of Alcatraz Island as a military prison expanded in the early 1900s. By 1909, construction began on the new main prison on the Island’s summit, marking another major construction period. This period would be characterized more by the construction of buildings and their associated earthwork than by the extensive grading and filling modifications of the two previous building campaigns. Alcatraz Island remained a harbor defense until 1907,¹¹⁸ when its use was officially changed to military prison and renamed “Pacific Branch, U. S. Military Prison, Alcatraz Island” on March 21, 1907. Alcatraz Island was to become the site of the permanent prison to serve the entire U.S. Army west of the Rockies and across the Pacific, as far as the Philippine Islands.¹¹⁹ All official responsibilities for harbor defense were halted. The Island was renamed in 1915 to “Pacific Branch, U.S. Disciplinary Barracks.”¹²⁰ The name was important as it now represented a place of discipline and education rather than just confinement.¹²¹

The official change in the mission of the Island to housing military prisoners required extensive building construction and demolition of earlier temporary or smaller buildings. A 1904 expansion of prisoner facilities on the south end of the Island for the Upper Prison had graded over the southern batteries—Practice Battery, Battery 12 (Three Gun Battery) and Battery 11. The most significant modifications during this period were the topographic and building changes on the Summit. The demolition of the Citadel in 1908 and its surrounding landscape including its gardens, parade ground and small structures as well as filling in of the remaining batteries was done to build the Main Prison and Stockade/Recreation Yard. Another substantial change occurred on the lower plateau with the demolition of the Upper Prison in 1912, and its subsequent replacement by the Parade Ground and officers’ quarters.

Directing this massive building campaign was Lieutenant Colonel Ruben Turner of the Quartermaster Corps, who arrived in 1907 and served as the first commandant of the new military prison. Turner directed prison laborers in demolishing the Citadel and other buildings and structures. He oversaw construction of the new Main Prison as well as the construction of the Powerhouse, Post Exchange, Morgue and workshops.¹²²

As a military prison, Alcatraz Island was scrutinized from afar as well. Its location and visibility from San Francisco drew criticism from the mainland for its stark appearance and the U.S. Army instituted a tradition of beautification that would continue through its tenure as a federal penitentiary. In the mid-1910s, the U.S. Army undertook a concerted effort to plant the slopes of the Island in an attempt to control erosion and beautify the Island. Plant materials used, such as agave, ivy, ice plant, and eucalyptus, were better suited to the growing conditions on Alcatraz Island,

¹¹⁸ Delgado 1992

¹¹⁹ Martini 2009: The Island was removed entirely from the control of the western military command, now called the Department of the Pacific. It remained in the control of the U.S. Army. Infantry and artillery soldiers who had long served as guards were replaced by two companies of the newly formed U.S.

¹²⁰ Martini 2009: Prisoners still represented the full spectrum of military crimes, but now they came from outposts as far away as Honolulu, Guam, the Philippines and China.

¹²¹ Martini 2009: Most inmates were assigned to a disciplinary company as First Class prisoners, and still performed physical labor but also received vocational skills and military sciences. There were still soldiers convicted of serious crimes on the Island, waiting for dishonorable discharges. They were the ‘numbered’ prisoners, who served time without any special training and were known only by their numbers. They were assigned cells away from the others, and not allowed to socialize with the First Class prisoners.

¹²² Martini 2009: Units assigned to the Island included the guard staff of the U.S. Military Prison Guards (later, U.S. Disciplinary Barracks Guards), and the prisoners assigned to the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Companies of the Second Disciplinary Battalion and the Second Disciplinary Band.

and many survived and altered the appearance of the Island. In 1924, the U.S. Army entered into an agreement with the California Spring Blossom and Wild Flower Association to transform the Alcatraz Island into a ‘garden.’¹²³ Many of these plants are found growing on the Island’s slopes today.¹²⁴

On the north end of the Island the remaining batteries underwent additional grading and filling to transform this area into a complex of new buildings with new uses connected to the Main Road by a new access road.¹²⁵ Batteries 1 and 2 were filled in and replaced by new buildings. Battery 1 became the site of the new Stores/QM Warehouse, built adjacent to the still extant North Caponier and on top of Battery 1’s defensive wall. Battery 2 became the location of the new Powerhouse and its Smokestack, completed in 1910. Attached to the Powerhouse was a two-story Shops and Laundry Building that also rested on top of Battery 2.¹²⁶ The new building for the boilers, the machinist/plumber and blacksmith shop were built on top of Battery 2, using its fortification wall as the northern foundation. The north caponier remained (it had earlier been converted to a magazine by Mendell) but was extensively modified for use as an oil storage tank. The construction of the Powerhouse and Shops and Laundry Building “wreaked havoc on the 1870s fortifications, primarily Battery 2. . . The quartermaster carefully preserved some of the old masonry work. . . remnants of the caponier, passageways, magazines and the tunnel.”¹²⁷ The circular fortification wall of Battery 3 remained. In 1920, the Old Shops and Laundry Building attached to the Powerhouse nearly tripled in size for the large multi-story laundry that serviced the U.S. Army posts in the Bay. The new laundry occupied the upper two floors and the first floor contained the carpenter and electrical shops and storage.¹²⁸ Two years later, construction began on the Model Industries building (Building 82), known initially as the Utilities Shops Building. The building was constructed on the substantial foundations of the buried masonry parapets and fortification walls of the North Battery. In 1928, two additional stories were added to the building.¹²⁹ The top floor housed a ‘model industries’ workshop where prisoners operated a furniture and refinishing plant.¹³⁰ The siting of the buildings, oriented at an oblique angle, made for a sheltered open yard where outside work activities could occur.¹³¹ The Industries Yard was connected to the Main Prison via the Utility Chase and Walk that led from the Old Shops and Laundry Building to the Main Prison. Prisoners exiting the Main Prison for work left through today’s “Barber Shop doorway” and walked down a flight of stairs where they formed up in the angle of the prison. They then moved down the road past the NCO cottages and Morgue, continuing down the Utility Chase and Walk that led directly to the Old Shops and Laundry Building where many worked.¹³²

¹²³ Thompson 1979: 249

¹²⁴ Lutsko 1992

¹²⁵ Martini 2009: Prisoner work activities such as plumbing and carpentry moved into the original two-story wing on the Powerhouse on its north side, designated as the Shops Building, once it was completed. Although these activities and shops moved out, the Lower Prison site remained a workshop area for prisoners and even expanded in size during WWI.

¹²⁶ Thompson 1979: 241

¹²⁷ Ibid., 242

¹²⁸ Martini 2009

¹²⁹ Martini 2009: The original one-story building contained prisoner work stations for blacksmith, typewriter repair, a paint shop and plumbing shop. The remaining industrial uses from the Guardhouse site were relocated to this building in 1928.

¹³⁰ Martini 2009: Unlike other Alcatraz prisoners who labored without pay, the prisoners associated with the model industries workshop received small salaries as an incentive for continued good behavior and efficient work practices.

¹³¹ Martini 2009: Clustering the prisoner activities in the north end of the Island made for easier supervision.

¹³² Martini 2009

On the northern point of the Island, the U.S. Army built the Model Industries building enclosing a portion of Battery 3 and Battery 4's fortification walls on its lower level. The access road likely followed the alignment of the battery road from earlier periods. Pirate's Cove on the northwest end of the Island was filled in, and the area above it quarried. This combination of activity created a large flat area that provided space for a road and other facilities.¹³³

The north end of the Island continued to serve as an aid to navigation. In 1901, Foghorn North was built, located on the slope in front of and slightly below the masonry fortification wall of Battery 3. This new fog signal and bell was similar to the one at the south end of the Island, which had been installed in 1856 and removed in 1900.¹³⁴

New buildings in other areas on the Island included quarters for military personnel, the Post Exchange along the Main Road, and most notably the construction of a three-story concrete barracks (today's Building 64) atop the Bombproof Barracks at the Wharf beginning in 1905. Demolition included temporary frame buildings such as the prison facilities along the main road just north of the Wharf.

The Wharf began to be upgraded in preparation for the construction of a new military prison. In 1907, a new steel piling dock was completed to provide ample space for unloading materials that would be used in the construction of the Main Prison on the Summit, as well as for the storage of steamer and domestic coal. The Bombproof Barracks were dramatically altered during this phase of building. Smaller frame structures on the top of the unfinished casemates were replaced by a three-story residential structure built of hollow concrete blocks during 1905 to 1907. The use of the building was also modified and now served as quarters for officers.¹³⁵

On the Summit, the level terrace of the Citadel and its surrounding landscape were demolished in 1908, substantially altering the appearance and function of the Summit. The upper floors of the Citadel were completely demolished, leaving the foundation walls, dry moat, and cisterns on the lower level as the foundation for the new Main Prison.¹³⁶ The adjutant's office to the southeast of the Citadel was demolished in 1911.¹³⁷ On the south end of the Summit, the original 1854 lighthouse and its attached quarters for the lightkeeper and assistant lightkeeper were demolished. The new 84-foot Light Tower was needed to maintain visibility of the navigation light above all other buildings on the Island. The new concrete Light Tower and Quarters were completed in 1909, adjacent to the site of the previous lighthouse.¹³⁸ On the north terrace of the Summit, behind the Citadel, the original 1860s parade ground and engineer's office were demolished to make room for the pending Main Prison. Another building, the bakery, had burned in 1903 and had been replaced by a new bakery in 1904 at the west side of the Island.¹³⁹

Construction on the new Main Prison began in 1908, according to Colonel Turner's plan for a military prison built of reinforced concrete,¹⁴⁰ and continued for five years.¹⁴¹ The front of the Main Prison was oriented to the south, providing a public face towards San Francisco. The new Main

¹³³ According to a map review, this probably was mostly completed prior to 1928. No other account seemingly exists for this change.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 461

¹³⁵ Thompson 1979: 637

¹³⁶ Martini 2003

¹³⁷ Martini 2010

¹³⁸ Thompson 1979: 462

¹³⁹ Thompson 1979: 239

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 641

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*: 248; Many sources cite 1912 as being the completion date of the Main Prison, giving it a construction period of four years. However, a 1914 buildings report lists it as being completed in 1913.

Prison was self-contained and included cellblocks, a kitchen, mess hall, wash areas, hospital, and morgue all within its main structure.¹⁴² To the north of the Main Prison, the U.S. Army built a large rectangular area, enclosed on four sides by reinforced concrete wall and topped by a sentry walk. Originally known as the Stockade, the area served as outdoor space for prisoners. The Stockade/Recreation Yard was built directly over Battery 6 and Battery 7, filling in the remaining traverses, magazines and tunnels of these batteries. The original brick fortification tunnels and bombproofs remained on three sides of the Stockade/Recreation Yard, visible from the exterior. These included the tunnels and bombproof on the east façade, Fortification Bombproof Tunnel “J,” (now on the interior of the Morgue) and those on the north and south facades, Fortification Bombproof Tunnel I and K, respectively. Both are extant and visible along the Stockade/Recreation Yard walls. A small, new building was added in 1910 to the east façade of the Stockade/Recreation Yard for use as the Morgue. Built of brick and reinforced concrete, in Mission Revival style, the Morgue enclosed the fortification tunnel and bombproof of Battery 6 that remained in its interior (still extant).

By 1912, three sites on Alcatraz Island had been used to house military prisoners including the new Main Prison on the Summit, at the Lower Prison site adjacent to the original Guardhouse, (in the building that would later be the Prison Site/Electric Shop), and at the Upper Prison on the Parade Ground plateau. However, all three were never in use at the same time.

During this period, the Main Road and its adjacent hillsides underwent several modifications with new building construction and the addition or extension of secondary roads. Plantings along the Main Road were modified as well, with the addition of Eucalyptus and Monterey Cypress trees planted along the portion leading to the Main Prison.¹⁴³

Along the Main Road at its first switchback, the U.S. Army built the new Post Exchange, completed in 1910,¹⁴⁴ replacing a much smaller wood frame structure that had been part of the building complex on top of the original Casemates. The Post Exchange was built of reinforced concrete¹⁴⁵ in Mission Revival style and sited immediately adjacent to, and on top of, the fortification wall on the east side of the Main Road. The Main Road was paved with concrete during the years 1920 to 1933.¹⁴⁶

Further up on the Main Road, was the Hospital (built earlier in 1881), which included a two story wing (built in 1900). The top story of the Hospital was at the elevation of the spur road along the NCO quarters. The U.S. Army demolished the Hospital between 1923 and 1927, leaving the wing but changing its use to a school and then later to NCO family quarters.¹⁴⁷ The area of the Hospital remained as a level terrace with its original retaining walls on the uphill and downhill sides. In the late 1920s, on the terrace formerly occupied by the Hospital, the U.S. Army built a new garden, identified as the Rose Garden on historic maps.¹⁴⁸ Historic photographs and official instructions for the post gardener indicate its use as the center for garden operations.¹⁴⁹ The 1928 map shows a hothouse that is also visible in historic photographs from 1933; rose garden beds; garden paths; a narrow path along the earlier access road connecting to the Main Road at the Hospital’s lower level (extant); and a set of exterior concrete stairs from 1900 that connected the

¹⁴² Thompson 1979: p 462

¹⁴³ Lutsko: 1992

¹⁴⁴ Thompson: 248

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Martini 2010

¹⁴⁷ Byers and Ashford 2007

¹⁴⁸ 1928 Map and one record of instructions dated October 10, 1930 for the post gardener

¹⁴⁹ Byers and Ashford 2007

Hospital's lower and upper levels. The NCO quarters were still in place above the Rose Garden as was the hospital wing, wall and road in front of NCO quarters. The hothouse was set parallel to the upper wall. It was replaced by a greenhouse in 1931 (Building 88) that was fourteen wide by twenty-four feet long and built on concrete piers. The greenhouse had wood and cell-o-glass walls, a wood frame and glass roof, a gravel floor (stone screenings) and a water connection.¹⁵⁰ From the 1920s until 1933 when the Island was transferred to the Bureau of Prisons, the Rose Garden was cultivated by prisoners who were allowed to move to and from the greenhouse without oversight. They reported for their gardening tasks in other parts of the Island and checked in when completed. The guard overseeing the garden was noted as being responsible for the distribution of the flowers to the residents.¹⁵¹

With the decline of Alcatraz Island's defensive role and its increased use as a military prison, a number of pedestrian routes around and between the Island's various levels were developed. Pedestrian circulation continued to generally followed the road system, especially along the Main Road, but more staircases were built or improved connecting the Island's different levels. These included replacing earlier wooden staircases with concrete stairs, and building new stairs. In 1910, a steep wooden staircase was rebuilt in concrete at the north end of Building 64 extending up from the Wharf (it remains today). Another staircase was built ca. 1910 at the south end of Building 64, leading up to the lower level plateau (site of the Upper Prison) and now the Parade Ground.

In 1918, the Perimeter Sentry Walk was completed around the edge of the Island following the shoreline. Along the east and northeast side of the Island, the Perimeter Sentry Walk was built into the Island's topography and consisted of a level walk with a concrete railing. Portions were cantilevered over the side of the Island. On the south and west sides, the Perimeter Sentry Walk was a wooden boardwalk attached to the cliffside. This portion was removed by 1929 according to historic photographs but the recesses remain. The boardwalk tied into a level walk along the shoreline of the Island on its south-end that connected to the Wharf and Parade Ground via a steep path. *Agave americana* was planted along portions of this walk on the south point of the Island's hillside and adjacent to the staircase, known as 'Lovers Lane' at the time.¹⁵² The Perimeter Sentry Walk in the Industries area was reported to have "flowers and shrubbery" planted on both sides wherever possible.¹⁵³ Along the Main Road, near the Officers' quarters and Rose Garden, the U.S. Army installed concrete railings along walls and at tops of slopes in the late 1910s and early 1920s.¹⁵⁴

On the west side of the Island, the Main Road and its adjacent hillsides were modified extensively by the U.S. Army in response to changing needs. The original stables and carriage house at the bottom of the Main Road remained in place until 1928.¹⁵⁵ The corral had been relocated north of its original location and below the Stockade/Recreation Yard after the Main Prison was completed in 1912. By 1928, the bottom of the Main Road included a retaining wall just west of the carriage house (Building 5).¹⁵⁶ The Main Road connected to a lower road, then continued north along an earlier battery road, and moved lower and to the south below the carriage house, connecting to the Parade Ground. The incinerator was set on a lower terrace, accessed by another secondary road set along the cliffs that connected to the north to the cleaning plant and to the south

¹⁵⁰ Army Historic Building Book

¹⁵¹ One record of instructions dated October 10, 1930 for the post gardener

¹⁵² Lutsko 1992

¹⁵³ Mayer 1918

¹⁵⁴ Various historic photographs in collection of GGNPC, GOGA, NARA, and elsewhere

¹⁵⁵ 1928 Map

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

along a road to the Parade Ground and additional officers' quarters. A set of stairs connected the corral with the road below. Another set of stairs accessed the incinerator.

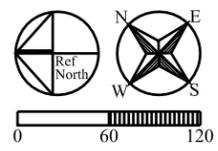
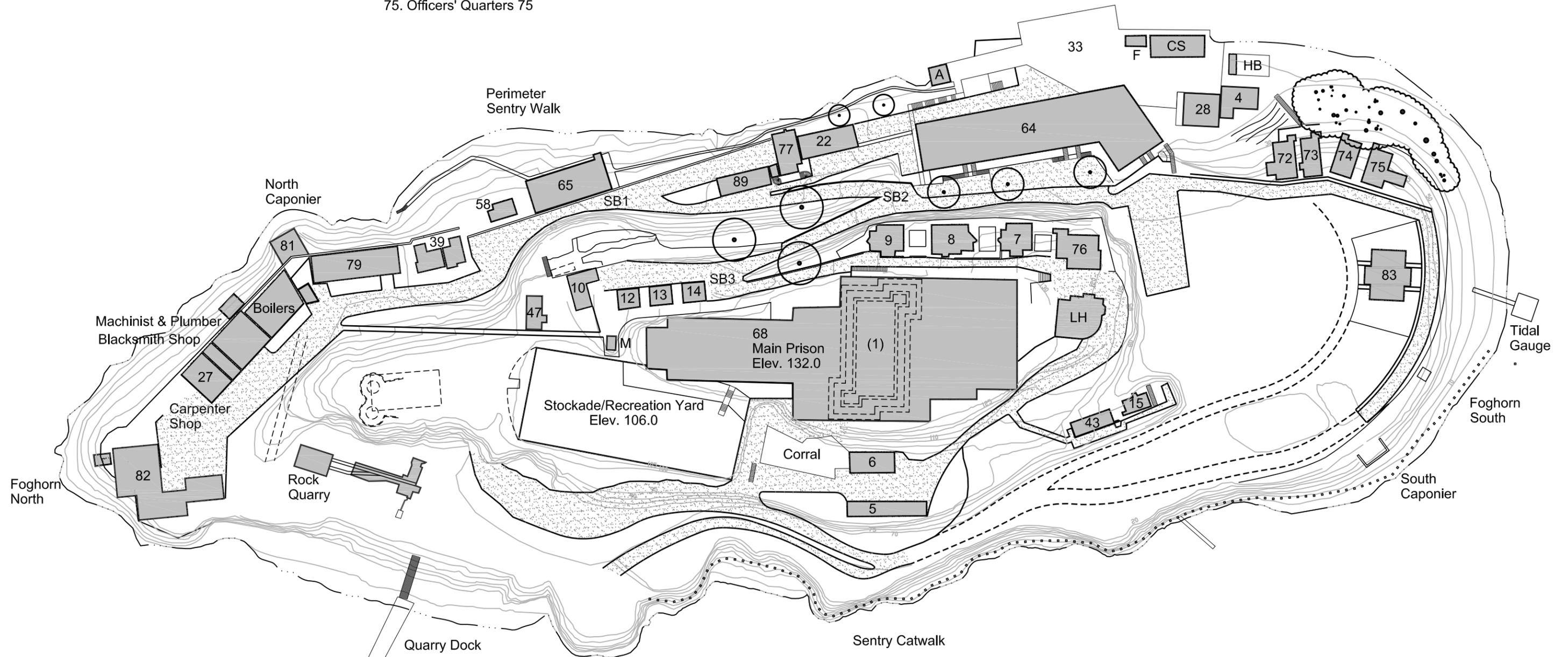
By 1933, this area had been modified extensively. The corral, stables and carriage house were demolished and replaced by two large lawns that covered the level area that previously held the structures. The Main Road split the two lawns as it had the earlier structures. The Main Road now included a new retaining wall on its east side to support the grade above it. The earlier wall on the road's west side had been extended and now wrapped around the corner and down the secondary road. An additional wall was built on the west side of the secondary road. Historic photos and historic aerials from 1930 to 1934 indicate that hillsides between the lawns and the roads and below the Main Prison and Stockade/Recreation Yard were planted. Original plantings were sod, clover and grass seed, but they did not thrive due to the Island's harsh climate.¹⁵⁷ The slopes were later planted with agave, ivy, and ice plant. The U.S. Army built an irrigation system using recycled water from prison showers, routed to the cistern above the West Lawn North in the area of the original corral. Plantings may have included lavender-flowered *Mesembryanthemum* and century plants.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Thompson 1979; Byers & Ashford 2008: 5

¹⁵⁸ Reichel 1934

Legend

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Citadel (foundation/moat) | 27. Old Shops and Laundry Buildings | 76. Warden's House | A Company Rear |
| 4. Quarter Master Store House | 28. Offices & Store Rooms | 77. Guardhouse Complex | CS Coal Shed |
| 5. Carriage House | 33. Wharf | 79. Stores / QM Warehouse | F Waiting Room |
| 6. Stable | 39. Civilian Residences | 81. North Caponier | HB Hand Ball Court |
| 7. Officers' Quarters 7 | 43. Married Soldiers Quarters (39. Ordnance Bldg) | 82. Model Industries | LH Lighthouse |
| 8. Officers' Quarters 8 | 47. Hospital Steward's Quarters | 83. Officer's Quarters-Duplex | M Morgue |
| 9. Officers' Quarters 9 | 58. NCO Residence | | SB1 Switchbacks |
| 10. Old Hospital Wing | 64. Building 64 | | |
| 12. Married Soldiers Quarters | 65. Post Exchange (PX) | | |
| 13. Married Soldiers Quarters | 68. Main Prison | | |
| 14. Married Soldiers Quarters | 72. Officers' Quarters 72 | | |
| 15. Married Soldiers Quarters | 73. Officers' Quarters 73 | | |
| 22. Guardhouse Complex | 74. Officers' Quarters 74 | | |
| | 75. Officers' Quarters 75 | | |



<p>FIGURE 2 - 46</p> <p>UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR</p> <p>NATIONAL PARK SERVICE GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA</p>	<p>TITLE OF PROJECT CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT</p> <p>HISTORIC PERIOD MILITARY PRISON 1908 - 1933</p> <p>NAME OF PARK ALCATRAZ ISLAND NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK</p>
	<p>REGION PACIFIC</p> <p>COUNTY SAN FRANCISCO</p> <p>STATE CALIFORNIA</p>

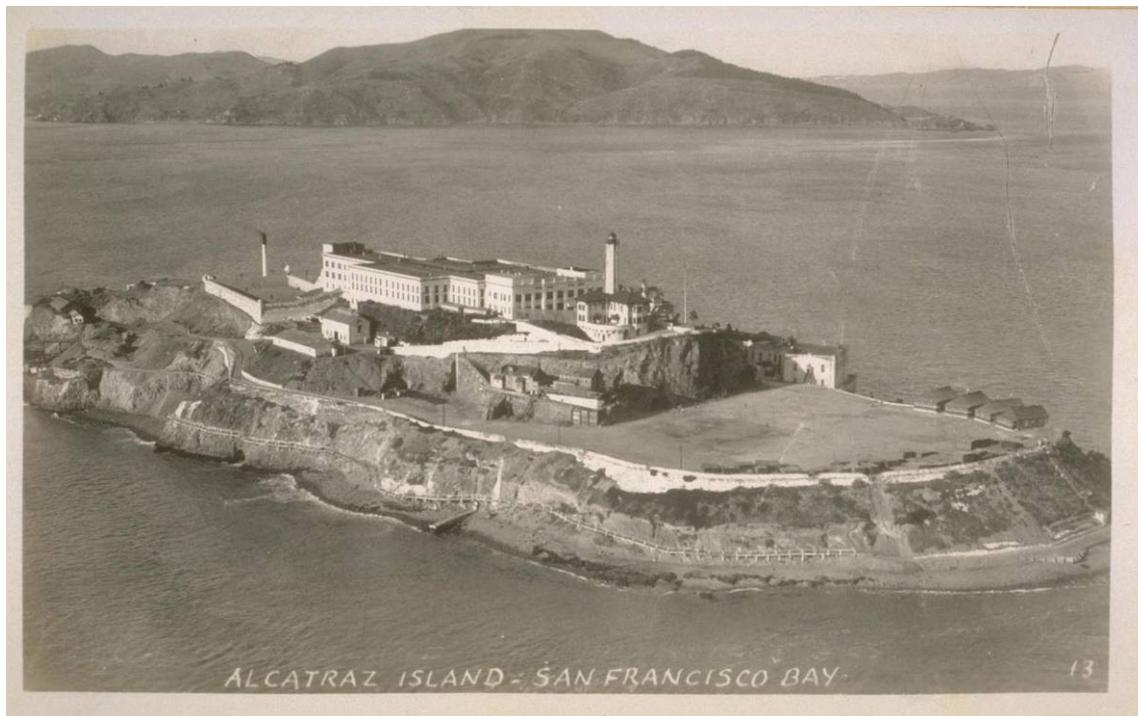


Figure 2-51. Alcatraz Island Aerial (c1922) (source: John Martini)



Figure 2-52. Alcatraz Island Aerial (c1924) (source: Fleming GOGA)

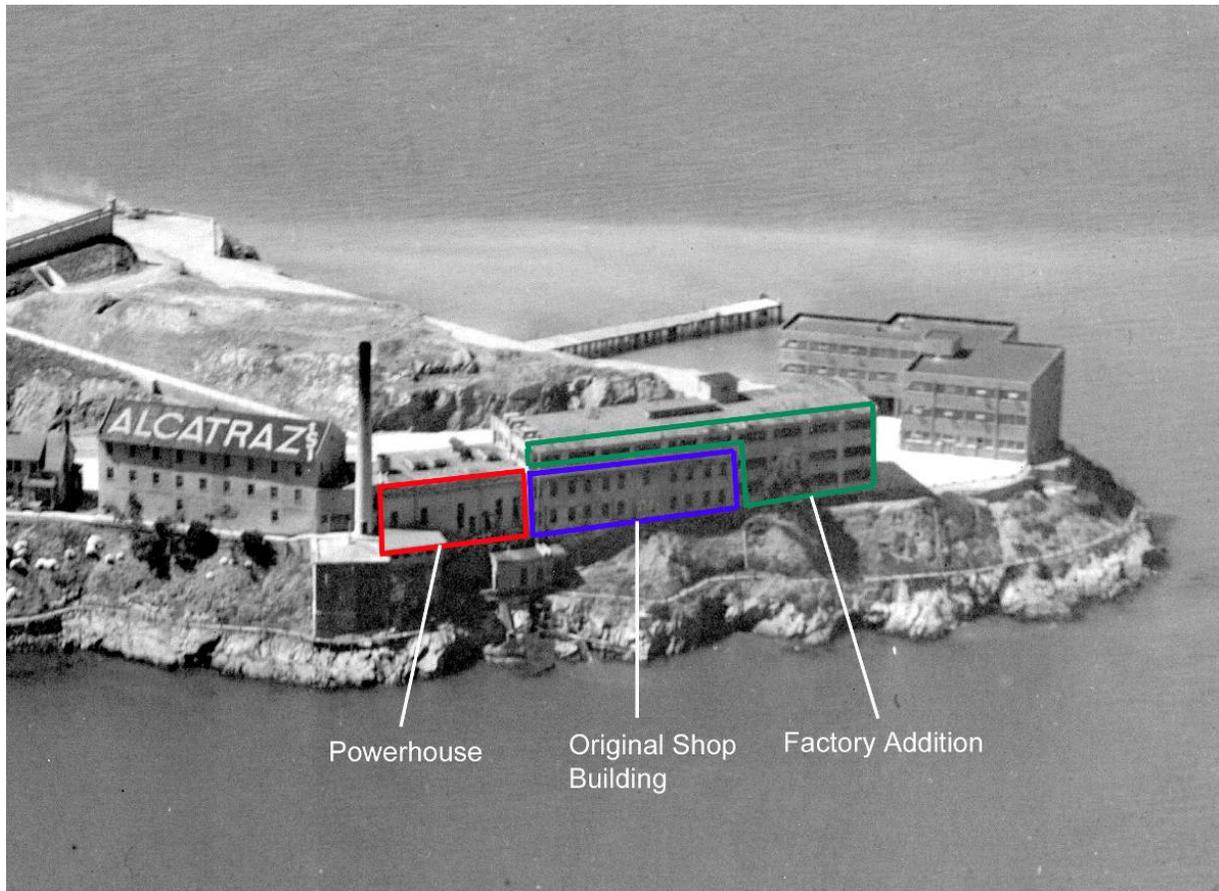


Figure 2-53. Alcatraz Island Aerial (c1930) (source: GOGA)



Figure 2-54. U.S. Army Alcatraz Island Aerial (c1930) (source: GOGA)

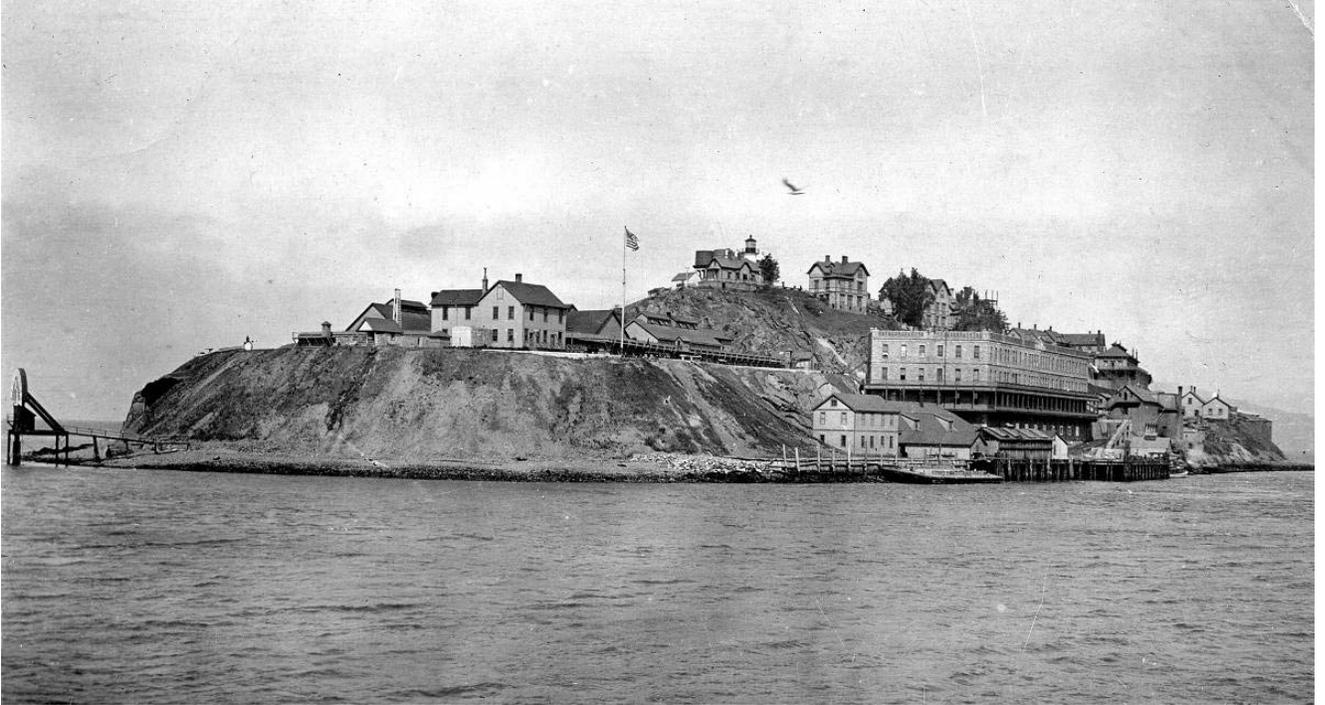


Figure 2-55. Alcatraz Island east side approaching Wharf (c1908) (source: GOGA)

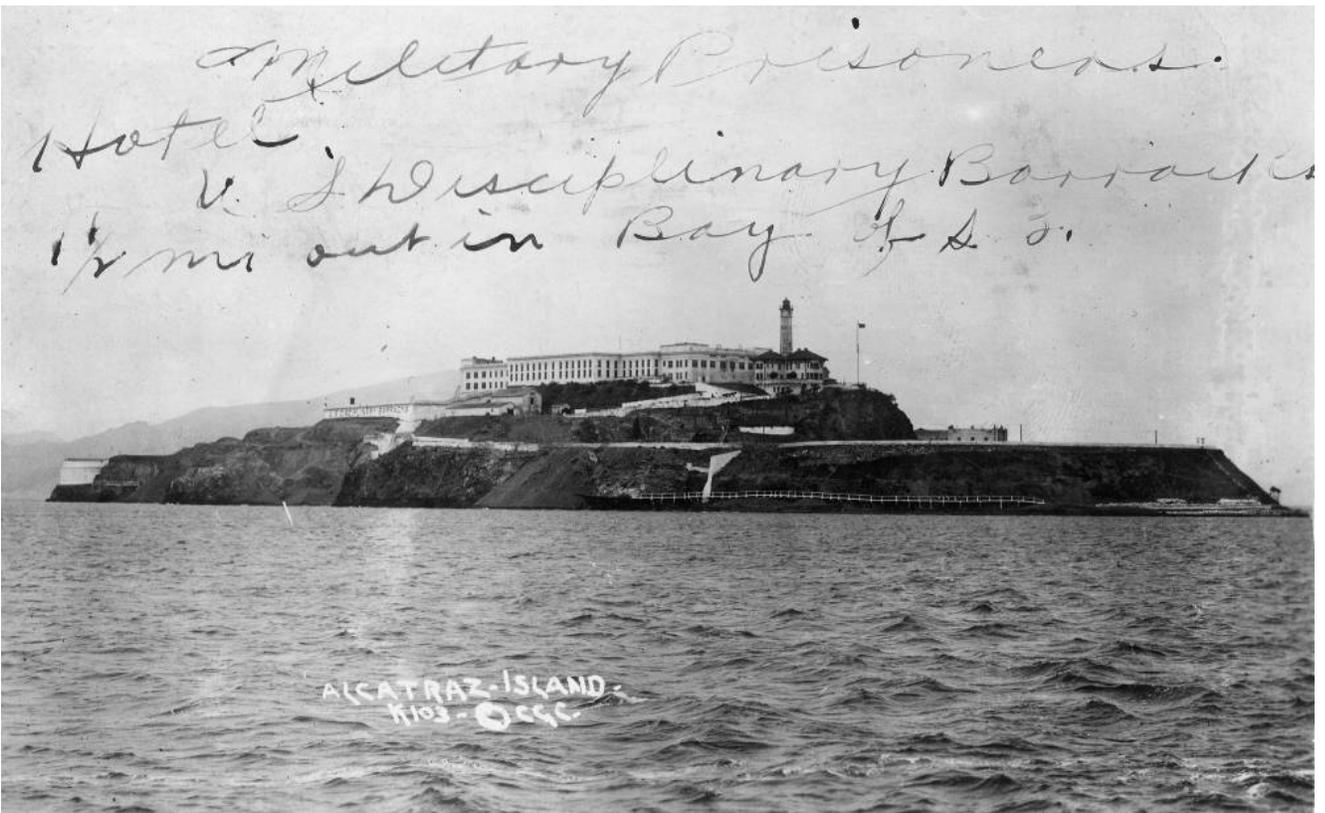


Figure 2-56. Alcatraz Island from west (c1917) (source: John Martini)



Figure 2-57. Alcatraz Island from west (c1921) (source: John Martini)



Figure 2-58. Alcatraz Island from west (c1925) (source: John Martini)



Figure 2-59. Lower Prison Library with Print Shop in foreground. Viewed from south (c1902) (source: NARA)



Figure 2-60. Lower Prison, viewed from north. Hospital at top right. (c1902) (source: NARA)



Figure 2-61. View to Angel Island. Guardhouse Complex at bottom right behind vegetation (c1902) (source: NARA)



Figure 2-62. Battery II demolition. North Caponier at left, viewed from northwest (c1910) (source: GOGA)



Figure 2-63. Wharf (c1919) (source: GOGA-3089)



Figure 2-64. Main Road, Switchback 1, and Post Exchange (c1915) (source: AAA)



Figure 2-65. Main Road, Post Exchange from south; left, (c1915) (source: AAA)



Figure 2-66. Road to Industries, Residences and Post Exchange, viewed from north (c1924) (source: SFPL)

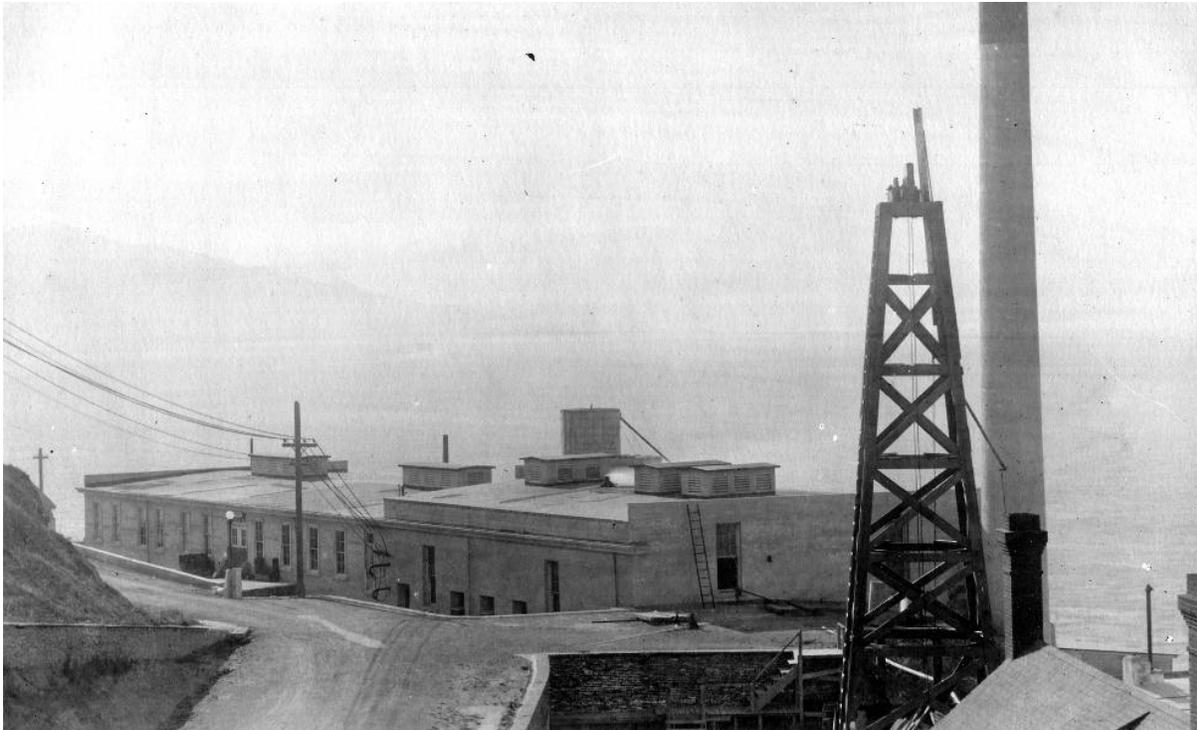


Figure 2-67. Old Shops and Laundry Building (left) and Powerhouse (right) (c 1915) (source: AAA)



Figure 2-68. Guardhouse Complex, Prison Site/Electric Shop, Main Road, Switchback 1 ; (c1920s) (source: GOGA)



Figure 2-69. Main Road, Switchback 2; left, (c1902) (source: GOGA-22017)



Figure 2-70. Main Road leading to Switchback 2 (c1920s) (source: GOGA-Fleming)



Figure 2-71. Officers' Row (c1915) (source: AAA)

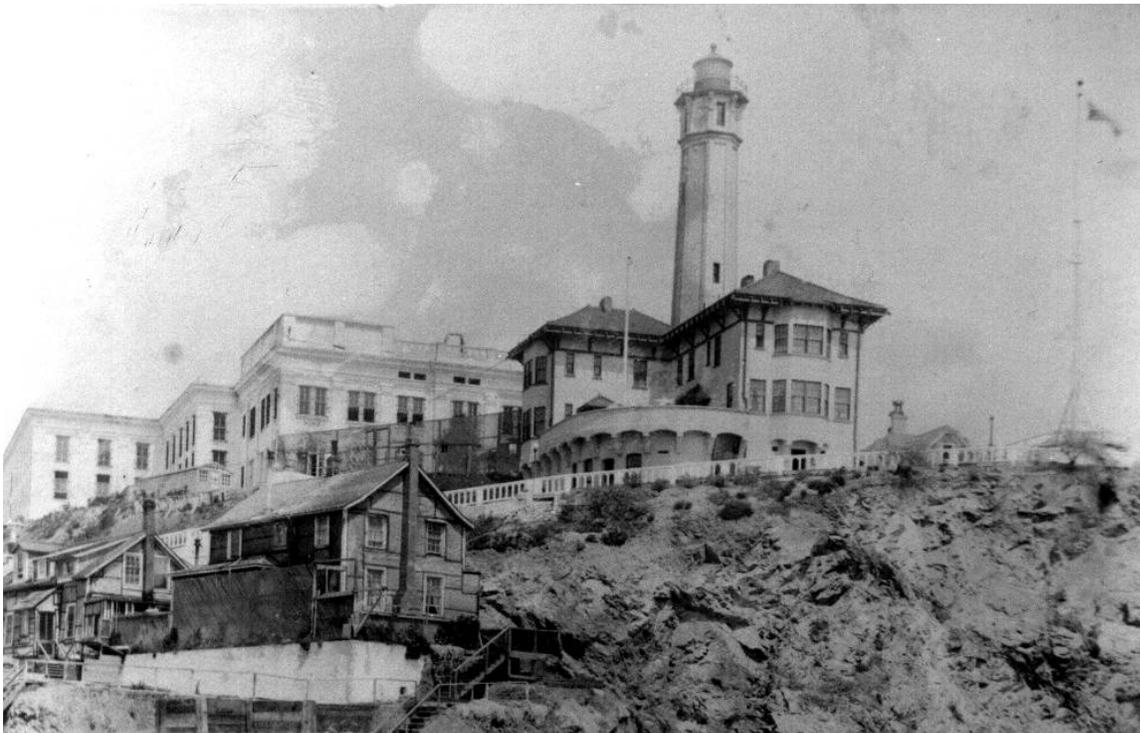


Figure 2-72. Main Prison, Lighthouse, Escarpment Slope (c1915) (source: GOGA)



Figure 2-73. Stairs and Lawn in front of Main Prison (c1915) (source: AAA)



Figure 2-74. Stockade/Recreation Yard, Main Prison (c1915) (source: AAA)

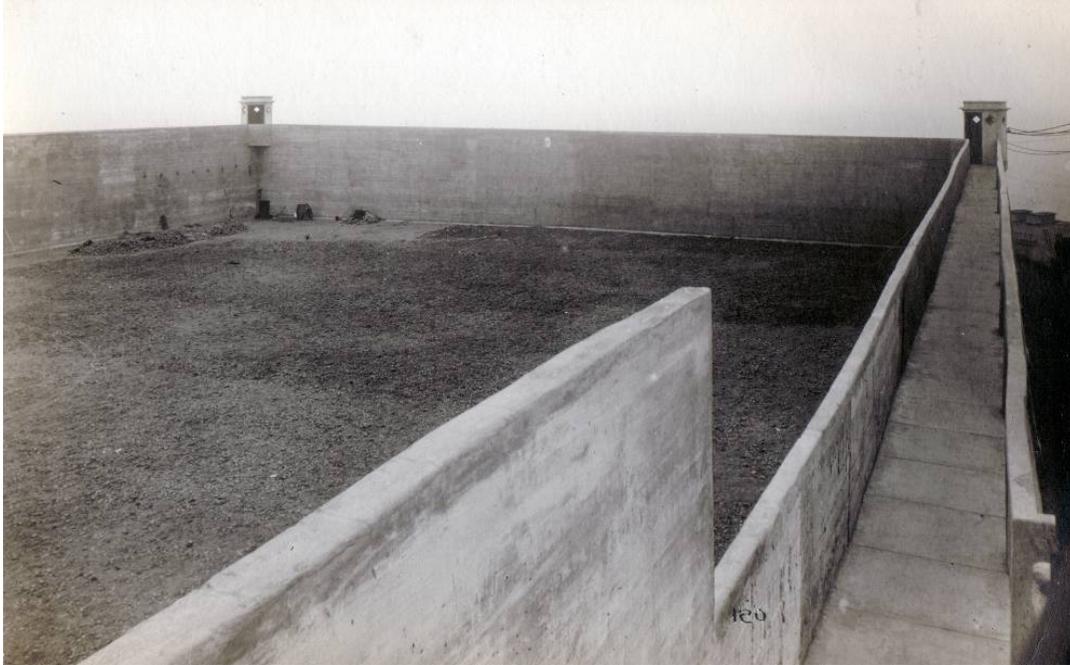


Figure 2-75. Stockade/Recreation Yard, Stockade/Recreation Yard walls, Guard Stations (c1915) (source: AAA)

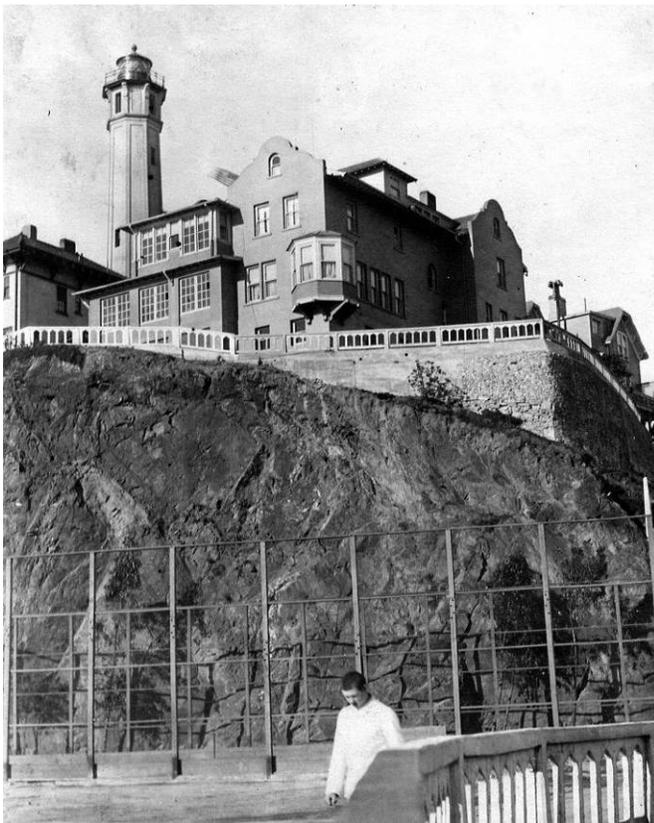


Figure 2-76. Lighthouse, Commandant's House (now Warden's House), left, (c1920s) (source: GOGA-2316)



Figure 2-77. South Fog Bell (c1902) (source: GOGA)



Figure 2-78. South end of Island with Rodman, Seawall Planter (c1933) (source: SFPL)



Figure 2-79. Left to right: Old Shops and Laundry Building, Powerhouse, and Stores/QM Warehouse; (c1925) (source: SFPL)



Figure 2-80. Left to right: Model Industries and Utilities Building (c1930s) (source: NARA)

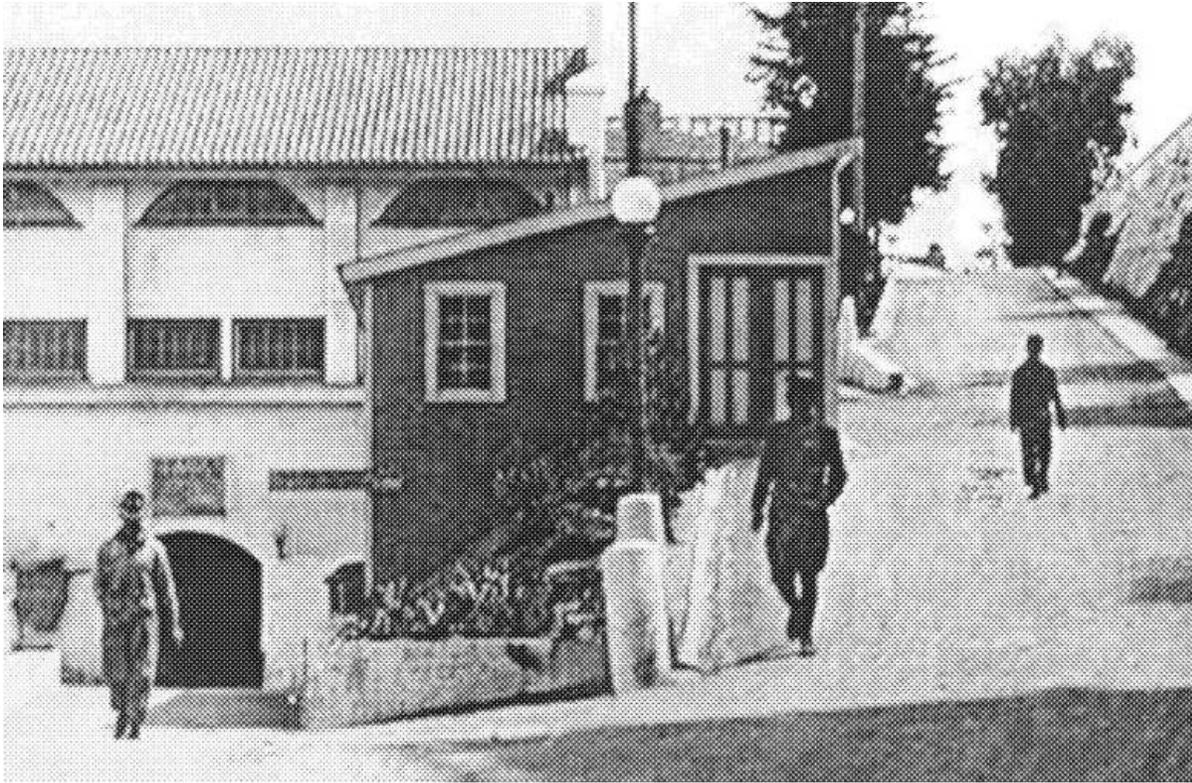


Figure 2-81. Electric Shop Bed (c1920s) (source: NPS)



Figure 2-82. Main Road with Officers' Row in background (c1930s) (source: John Martini)



Figure 2-83. Sentry Catwalk around south and west sides of Island (c1920) (source: NPS GGNRA Archives)