Fort Point Audio Tour Transcript  
   
ANNCR = Announcer  
SOLDIER = Unidentified soldier  
SFX = Sound effects (Background SFX which occur under the voices are not  
indicated.)  
   
SERGEANT: [ECHO ADDED TO SOUND AS IF COMING OVER A LOUDSPEAKER]  
Respectable citizens will be allowed to visit the interior of the fort  
accompanied by a non-commissioned officer.  
   
ANNCR: Welcome to a day in the life of a Fort Point soldier. We  
begin as the day began for soldiers garrisoned here back in the 1860¹s  
during the American Civil War.  
   
PRIVATE: At daybreak, I wake up to the sound of drums and fifes.  
   
ANNCR: Please proceed through the double doorway into the outdoor  
area at the fort center, the parade.  
   
PRIVATE: I get up, I dress, I join my company in the parade.  
   
ANNCR: Head for that big gun in the middle of the parade ground.  
I¹ll guide your tour, with help from some characters from the past, like the  
sergeant and the private you¹ve just met, and some present-day Fort Point  
experts. At the big gun, pause for a moment.  
   
PRIVATE: I look up toward the sky, hopin¹ to see some light  
filterin¹ through the fog, promising¹ a warmer day  
   
ANNCR: Look up at the walls across the parade and at either end of  
the parade. Look through the open arches. You see that those sides of the  
fort are honeycombed with arched rooms. The rooms are called casemates, and  
they give immediate evidence of Fort Point¹s purpose. Each casemate was  
build to house a smooth-bore cannon, similar to this Rodman next to you.  
Three tiers of casemated cannon, plus a fourth tier on top, with guns firing  
over the walls. Four tiers of massive brickwork and stacked artillery, all  
for the purpose of guarding against an enemy attacker entering San Francisco  
Bay.  
   
ANNCR: Now turn around, and look back at the south, or land face of  
the fort. Notice how its appearance differs from the other sides -- columns  
supporting gallery walkwaysŠ windows, doors. Here were the fort¹s living  
quarters.  
   
PRIVATE: I think of fresh-brewed coffee and the warm bunk I just  
left.  
   
ANNCR: In the first half of the 19th century, the United States  
government built more than 40 mighty forts like this oneŠ  
   
HEALY: Što protect strategically important harbors, river ways, and  
portsŠ  
   
ANNCR: National Park Service Ranger Bob Healy:  
   
HEALY: Šand San Francisco Bay was felt to be the most important  
harbor to protect on the Pacific coast at that time.  
   
ANNCR: Construction began here in 1853. The fort¹s first garrison  
arrived for duty in February of 1861, only a few weeks before the start of  
the American Civil War.  
   
VOICE: Company dismissed!  
   
ANNCR: Let¹s head back to the land face now. Set your sights on that  
passageway through which you first entered the fort ­ the sally port, it¹s  
called. Walk over there. That¹s our next stop.  
   
PRIVATE: At seven, the drums will beat sick call and other calls,  
the morning work details.  
   
ANNCR: You should be nearing the sally port entrance now. Enter the  
sally port and stop just inside. As the only way into or out of the fort,  
the sally port was heavily defended by massive iron-studded doors at both  
ends and by rifle slits. You see those holes set at about head level in the  
side walls? Those are rifle slits. Imagine eyes of trained riflemen sighting  
down gun barrels behind those slits. Now take a few steps further into the  
passageway.  
   
PRIVATE: The call to guard mount beats at eight. If it¹s my time for  
guard duty, I stand inspection and then march to parade with my company¹s  
guard detail.  
   
ANNCR: Now turn and face the side wall, directly opposite where you  
picked up your audio equipment. Look at the right-hand end of that wall,  
near the parade end of the sally port. You¹ll see an open doorway and a ramp  
leading into the next room. That¹s the entrance to the guardroom. Please  
enter the guardroom now.  
   
PRIVATE: After the guard mount ceremony, that¹s where you¹ll find me  
for 24 long hours. There, or at a sentinel post.  
   
HEALY: A primary part of every soldier¹s life during his enlistment  
in the United States Army was guard duty.  
   
ANNCR: At the bottom of the entry ramp, turn to your left. Turn to  
the wall above that wooden platform that juts out into the room. Those four  
holes in the wall are the sally port rifle slits. The wooden platform,  
called a banquette, was for the guard to stand on when aiming and firing the  
rifles at invaders in the sally port.  
   
HEALY: The soldiers would serve at a sentinel post and they would  
have a relief every two hours. Two hours on, four hours off. Two hours on,  
four hours off.²  
   
PRIVATE: Round the clock. Two hours of sentinel post alternating  
with four hours on standby here in the guardroom. Back in here, you pretty  
quickly get to feelin¹ cooped up.  
   
ANNCR: Move past the platform to the soldier mannequin at the back  
of the room. This mannequin bears a good likeness to the average Civil War  
soldier at Fort Point. Look him over. He was likely to be Irish or German  
from the East Coast and about 26 years old. Four hours of confinement in  
this room probably was a trial for him.  
   
PRIVATE: Four hours is a long stretch to stay put, especially where  
there¹s nothin¹ much to do and sleepin¹ is not allowed.  
   
HEALY: These men might write a letter, they might play cards.  
   
PRIVATE: You might oil your rifle.  
   
ANNCR: Your Springfield rifle, like the mannequins.  
   
PRIVATE: Or polish your brass.  
   
ANNCR: Brass fittings on weapons, brass buttons. You can see he had  
plenty of those.  
   
HEALY: The guard detail was always expected to be in their full  
dress uniforms, ready for inspection.  
   
ANNCR: A prescribed uniform of the Union Army, properly cleaned and  
in good repair.  
   
PRIVATE: You brush your frock coat, you polish your booties, your  
belt, your knapsack.  
   
SERGEANT: A little industry in mending his clothes will well reward  
the frugal soldier.  
   
ANNCR: Soldiers called their sewing kits housewives.  
   
PRIVATE: We do all our mendin¹ here, me and my little housewife.  
   
ANNCR: Now please move to the front of the room.  
   
PRIVATE: At nine, the drums beats for morning drill. It¹s required  
of all enlisted men, except the day¹s guard.  
   
ANNCR: Use the ramp leading out onto the parade to exit the  
guardroom.  
   
PRIVATE: A drill call in the mornin¹, then again in the afternoon,  
my company is formed. For one hour we¹re drilled and marching and in the  
manual of arms, or at the guns.  
   
ANNCR: Outside the doorway, turn left. Proceed along the gallery to  
that wooden bench against the wall. Stop when you get to the bench. Take a  
seat if you like.  
   
ANNCR: Fort Point was never quiet. From reveille to taps every day,  
drums and fifes resounded throughout the fort.  
   
HEALY: The soldier¹s life was controlled by the sound of music. The  
artillery companies always had a drummer and a fifer assigned, and these  
musicians would play specific roles on their instruments, to tell the  
soldiers when to gather, when to eat their meals, when to appear for drill.  
   
ANNCR: Look out at the parade. Imagine clusters of soldiers in  
various formations out there, some marching, some doing close-order drill  
with weapons.  
   
PRIVATE: Me among them, unless I¹m on guard detail.  
   
ANNCR: Elsewhere in the fort, gun drills are underway. Why so much  
drill? Colonel Milton Halsey, Executive Director of the Fort Point and  
Presidio Historical Association:  
   
HALSEY: Basically, repetitive drill fixes in the mind of the  
individual soldier the need to react by rote almost, to be able to perform  
your function under hazardous conditions, when bullets start flying at you,  
while your mind starts to wander sometimes.  
   
ANNCR: Daily drill call itself could be a call to danger, as you¹re  
about to discover. If you¹ve been sitting down, please get up now.  
   
SERGEANT: Extinguish all smoking materials. Remove swords and shoes.  
   
ANNCR: Next to the wooden bench on your left, you¹ll see a ramp that  
leads into the powder magazine. Go up the ramp. Turn immediately to your  
right. Walk slowly toward the power magazine exhibit.  
   
HEALY: There was no direct access into the powder magazines. The  
engineers who designed the fort were concerned about the possibility of an  
enemy shell exploding immediately adjacent to the black powder.  
   
ANNCR: At the first doorway on your left, enter the powder magazine  
exhibit. You should be just inside the powder magazine. Pause to look at the  
barrels on the storage racks. Those are gunpowder barrels.  
   
HEALY: A single spark within these rooms could mean the complete  
destruction of the fort and the death of all the soldiers within.  
   
ANNCR: Sparks from cigars. A sword striking a brick wall. A brass  
button. Now turn to your left. Look at the short wall between the two racks  
of powder barrels. Find the sketch of a soldier removing his shoes.  
   
PRIVATE: On duty here, I pull socks over my shoes, or else I wear  
rubberized shoes. I move with great caution. I¹m careful not to bump  
anything. Very careful not to drop my lanterns, my only light. Not to drop  
anything.  
   
SFX: [EXPLOSION]  
   
ANNCR: Don¹t worry; the power barrels are empty. There never was an  
explosion here, not in this fort.  
   
PRIVATE: Except in our minds. On duty here, you do think a lot about  
explosions, stories about other forts blown to smithereens. Keeps you from  
getting careless.  
   
ANNCR: Look down at the floor. The widely spaced floorboards are for  
ventilation, to keep the powder dry.  
   
HEALY: Ventilation was a terrible problem in the moist atmosphere of  
Fort Point.  
   
ANNCR: Turn right and continue to the back wall of the powder  
magazine. Look up at the top of the wall. See the opening where the wall  
meets the ceiling? That¹s a vent. The ventilation passages zigzag through  
the walls to stop enemy fire. Below the vent, you¹ll see another drawing on  
the wall. It¹s of soldiers moving powder barrels.  
   
PRIVATE: Every so often, we have to take all of these barrels  
outside for inspection.  
   
ANNCR: A barrel held 100 pounds of powder.  
   
PRIVATE: Outside, we take each barrel and roll it back and forth on  
boards. That¹s to break up clumps in the powder caused my moisture. It¹s no  
fun handlin¹ that touchy stuff but it has to be done.  
   
ANNCR: In times of combat, there is a whole series of steps  
necessary to assure safe movement of the powder to where it has to go --  
ultimately, to the guns. Now we¹re going to move, as the black powder did,  
through the sequence of steps between the powder magazine and the guns in  
the casemates. Turn around to your right and face the opposite end of the  
room. To your left, you¹ll see a window-like opening in the wall. Take a  
look through it. This window allowed communication with the room next door,  
the filling room, which is our next stop.  
   
SOLDIER 1: Stand by in there! Barrel of powder comin¹ around!  
   
SOLDIER 2: Standing by. Watch your step in the passage.  
   
ANNCR: Now let¹s follow the path of the powder from the magazine to  
the filling room. Go to the opening through which you entered this room.  
Exit the powder magazine. Turn left. Wind along the corridor until you come  
to the next room. This is the filling room. You can¹t miss it. The corridor  
doesn¹t go anywhere else.  
   
 In this room, soldiers filled ammunition with  
black powder from the storage barrel. Look at the objects in the display  
case.  
   
PRIVATE: You pour measured amounts of it into flannel cartridge  
bags.  
   
ANNCR: Like that white drawstring bag on the left side on this case.  
   
PRIVATE: You put the filled cartridge bags into the budge barrel.  
   
ANNCR: That barrel to the right, with the leather drawstring top.  
   
PRIVATE: And then you haul the full budge barrel out to the cannon.  
   
ANNCR: Shelves were also filled with powder here. The small green  
box, which is called a pass box, was used at the cannon. More about that  
when we get to the cannon. Let¹s go. Head to your right, to the doorway set  
in the angled wall. Notice the thickness of the wall as you exit.  
   
 You now should be standing outside the filling  
room. Look around. You¹re in a casemate, the first in a row or gallery of  
them. A casemate, remember, is a gun room. Look down the row of casemates.  
We¹re headed for that group of cannon you see down the way. Start walking  
toward them. Against the wall on your right, there¹s a display of  
ammunition. Let¹s take a look. These projectiles resemble the ammunition  
that soldiers loaded and fired from the cannon you¹re about to see. Solid  
shot were used against wooden sailing ships. Along with the other  
projectiles in this case, they could also do considerable damage to human  
targets.  
   
 Now continue on through the casemates. Those  
outer walls are seven feet thick ­ seven feet of granite and brick, true  
masonry. Approach the group of cannon. Stop beside the first cannon. The  
three cannon you see here represent the major types that were housed here  
during the Civil War, about 55 of them in all. Gun drills, sometimes  
including actual firing, were held twice daily. They were required of all  
soldiers.  
   
SOLDIER: Commence firing! Load!  
   
ANNCR: It took a crew of three to load and fire a cannon like this  
first one, a 24-pounder flank howitzer. Notice the budge barrel is close at  
hand on the left. At the appropriate point in the loading process, a crewman  
would transfer a filled cartridge bag from the budge barrel to the small  
green pass box. This would then be passed on to the muzzle end of the gun.  
Then the cartridge bag would be dropped into the barrel of the cannon and  
ignited.  
   
SOLDIER: Fire!  
   
SFX: [CANNON BEING FIRED]  
   
ANNCR: Walk around the back end of the first cannon to get a look at  
the second. It¹s an eight-inch Columbiad, which required a crew of five.  
  
  
HALSEY: It is difficult to work with those big cannon, that weight  
over five tons each and can smash your foot or finger in the blink of an  
eye.  
   
PRIVATE: When your gun discharges, the sound slams into your  
eardrums like a bludgeon and your head fills up with the sulfury smell of  
gunpowder. You get so caught up in the excitement you tend to forget the  
perils of your situation.  
   
ANNCR: Although very few serious accidents were recorded here at  
Fort PointŠ  
   
HEALY: Šthere was always the possibility of guns exploding upon  
firing, and the soldiers standing around being killed.  
   
ANNCR: Move around the front, or muzzle end, of the second cannon.  
Take a look at the third cannon. Short of exploding, a gun might be knocked  
off its carriage by the force of firing. Imagine this 32-pounder as a loose  
cannon.  
   
SFX: [CANNON BEING FIRED]  
   
PRIVATE: After drill call, 10:45 a.m., the drums beats fatigue and  
police. That's dirty-work duty, like pumpin' water, gatherin' wood, cleanin'  
up the parade, scrubbin' privies.  
   
ANNCR: Walk past the big cannon and immediately turn right. Move on  
toward the open parade area.  
   
PRIVATE: If my sergeant's got some beef with me, I'm apt to find  
myself scrapping rust off a cannon. Fatigue detail's so miserable as to turn  
an otherwise industrious soldier into a malingerer.  
   
ANNCR: Enter the parade area. Our next stop is the surgeon's office  
on the second tier. A short way into the parade, turn to your right. Go  
toward the corner. When you get there, you'll see a doorway leading to a  
circular staircase. Please enter and wait at the foot of the staircase.  
We'll use these stairs to get to our next stop. At the first landing you'll  
see open double-doors on your right. That's the surgeon's office. Please  
turn off your tape player for your climb, and turn it on again to join me  
inside the surgeon's office.  
   
 Welcome back. You should be standing just inside  
the surgeon's office on the second level. Turn to the wall on your right.  
Walk over to the exhibit panel in the middle of this wall. It's entitled,  
"Medical Treatment at Fort Point."  
   
PRIVATE: If you report to sick call in the morning, or if you have  
some kind of accident like in a gun drill, or suffer an attack of  
excruciating and debilitating pain while scraping rust from cannon, you're  
sent up here to see the surgeon or, more likely, the hospital steward.  
   
ANNCR: The bearded soldier in the photograph on the exhibit panel  
appears to be a hospital steward. To the left of the exhibit panel, there's  
a mannequin wearing the hospital steward's uniform. Take a look. This  
non-commissioned officer had enough medical training to be able to recommend  
which cases were serious enough to require treatment at the post hospital on  
The Presidio, and to treat the lesser ones himself, with some help from a  
hospital steward's manual.  
   
SERGEANT: The extraction of teeth by the dental turnkey should not  
ordinarily be practiced.  
   
ANNCR: That's the instrument you see in the mannequin's right hand.  
   
SERGEANT: The key is a clumsy instrument and is liable to break the  
teeth, bruise and lacerate the gum, and do other mischief. Occasionally,  
however, with a limited supply of dental instruments furnished to the  
hospital steward, its use may become necessary.  
   
ANNCR: The hospital steward was also trained to distinguish those  
soldiers who were truly sick from those trying to avoid unpleasant duty.  
   
 Now step back and look around the room. Imagine  
the smell of coal smoke from the fireplace there near the window, mingled  
with other sick-room smells in this room, notably the smell of chloroform.  
It was just coming into widespread use as an anesthetic in Civil War times.  
Alcohol in the form of whiskey was also widely used for pain. Now, let's  
leave the surgeon's office.  
   
 Go back toward the entrance. On your right, just  
before you get to the entrance, you'll see a doorway. Stop and look through  
the open door. You're looking down the full length of the area reserved for  
commissioned officers. There quarters were down that way, some roomy enough  
to accommodate an officer and his wife and children. Unmarried officers were  
quartered two to a suite, in which each had his own sleeping room. The  
officer's mess was at the far end of the tier. We'll visit that later.  
   
 But now, because this tour celebrates the  
enlisted men of Fort Point, we're going straight up to their quarters on the  
next level. We'll again use the circular staircase to climb to the third  
level. Stop your tape player before you start to climb the stairs. Restart  
it when you reach the next level.  
   
 Welcome back. You should now be just outside the  
stairwell on the third-tier gallery walkway. This whole tier was enlisted  
men's quarters, their bunkrooms here at this end, their mess at the other.  
   
PRIVATE: At noon, comes the dinner call, and a herd of hungry men  
thunders toward the mess hall, with me in the lead when I can manage.  
   
ANNCR: From the gallery walkway, enter the first door on your right.  
We're going into an enlisted men's bunkroom. Just inside to your right,  
you'll see the entrance to the enlisted men's quarters exhibit, a room that  
has been fully furnished and arranged as it was during the Civil War. You  
might want to turn off your tape player and take a look. When you're ready  
to continue our tour, come back to this room and restart your player.  
   
 Are you back in the first room? This is one in a  
row of rooms where privates were quartered. Notice how small it is.  
   
RODGERS: They were assigned two men to a bed, which in that time in  
the country wasn't an unusual thing.  
   
ANNCR: National Park Service Ranger Maurine Rodgers.  
   
RODGERS: They came from the agricultural family, so people would  
have one bed for all their brothers and sisters, so they were used to  
sleeping in a bed with other people.  
   
AANCR: Here, they slept two up and two down in a bed, four to a bunk  
bed. Take a closer look at the bunk bed. Actually, there were six of these  
in each room. That's 24 men sharing one of these rooms. Pat the top of the  
mattress with your hand.  
   
SERGEANT: Regulation 99. Ordinarily, the cleaning will be on  
Saturdays. The chiefs of squads will cause bunks and bedding to be  
overhauled.  
   
PRIVATE: When your mattress is stuffed with straw, you don't have to  
be told to turn it, shake it, and air it regularly.  
   
RODGERS: Because the straw would get full of bugs and fleas and  
things like that.  
   
ANNCR: Ideally, mattresses would be re-stuffed about once a month.  
   
RODGERS: There is one letter than we've run across from a soldier on  
The Presidio to his sister, and the high point of the letter is that they  
changed the straw in their mattresses that day and they had new straw.  
   
PRIVATE: An occasion of jubilation.  
   
ANNCR: One fourth of that bunk bed was just about all a solder had  
that he could call "home" at Fort Point. And even there, army regulations  
didn't leave much to individual choice, not even in personal matters like  
where to put dirty socks...  
   
SERGEANT: Regulation 97: Dirty clothes will be kept in the knapsack.  
   
ANNCR: ...or love letters.  
   
SERGEANT: No article of any kind be put under the bedding.  
   
RODGERS: The regulations said they had to sleep head to toe so they  
wouldn't spread respiratory diseases.  
   
SERGEANT: The feet to be washed twice a week.  
   
RODGERS: They had sinks in the rooms, they had running-water sinks.  
Most of the forts on the East Coast were a lot more primitive as far as  
washing, bathroom arrangements, and all that kind of thing, so these guys  
were in a pretty, you know, for them it was the ritz.  
   
ANNCR: Imagine trying to go to sleep in this "ritzy" room.  
   
PRIVATE: Coal smoke and candle smoke a soldier knows, along with the  
musty smell of as many as 24 damp wool topcoats, and 24 damp wool frock  
coats, and 24 pairs of boots. There's coal soot from the fireplace between  
your teeth and in your ears, along with the sound of your numerous roommates  
thrashin' about on straw mattresses. A man could rest better, wide awake  
down in the guard room. Breathe easier, too.  
   
ANNCR: Let's get some air. Exit through the door we used to enter  
this room.  
   
 Back on the gallery, you'll see a bench right  
beside the bunkroom door. Sit down and relax for a few moments, as soldiers  
must have done in leisure moments, after their noonday meal, maybe, or in  
the evening between supper and lights out. It's easy to imagine them  
gathering out here on the gallery.  
   
RODGERS: Playing cards and backgammon, they may play some music and  
have a pipe and just be the boys in the barracks.  
   
ANNCR: There wasn't much else for them to do. San Francisco was far  
away, your three-day pass would provide time enough for a visit to San  
Francisco's exciting Barbary Coast, but...  
   
RODGERS: It was too expensive for the soldiers that made $13 a  
month.  
   
ANNCR: Occasionally, there was an evening band concert on The  
Presidio, always there was fishing on the bay, but for the most part, you  
took your recreation with your buddies here on this gallery.  
   
PRIVATE: Right after dinner, we're called to another hour of fatigue  
duty -- more dirty work. It sure takes a lot of solider fatigue to keep  
this post in high order.  
   
ANNCR: Break time's over for us, too. Go to your left, back to the  
circular stairs at the end of this gallery. We're going to climb the last  
flight of steps to the top of the fort, the barbette tier.  
   
SERGEANT: Enlisted persons will not be permitted to go on the  
barbette tier, except on duty.  
   
ANNCR: ...what could be the most uncomfortable duty a Fort Point  
guardsman ever had to endure. Stop your tape player before you start up the  
stairs and restart it when you get to the top landing.  
   
 You should be up on the barbette tier, just  
outside the stairwell shelter. Button up if it's windy today. Please walk  
directly ahead toward the white lighthouse tower. The lighthouse was built  
during the Civil War at the top of another spiral staircase. Stand at the  
base of the tower. Look slightly to your left. You'll see three steps up  
onto a raised area, just a few strides away. That's the roof of the west  
bastion, a tower filled with gun rooms that juts out on the west side of the  
fort. Walk toward it now. Step up onto the raised area. Face into the wind,  
looking out toward the ocean. Behold, the Golden Gate.  
   
PRIVATE: Standin' sentinel up here, you sorta get past admirin' the  
scenery. You walk the circumference of the barbette, 'round and 'round, two  
hours at a stretch. Never mind that it's windy, forget the cold and the  
damp, turn up the collar of your overcoat, keep on walkin' and watchin'.  
   
SERGEANT: All ships larger than schooners will be reported, and  
their course of sailing, whether inward or outward bound.  
   
ANNCR: After all, keeping watch over the Golden Gate was Fort  
Point's reason for being.  
   
HALSEY: San Francisco, by 1853, was a great center of wealth, with  
the gold and silver of the Nevada-California field passing through here. It  
was a great center of international trade. It was also a great anchorage for  
fleets -- mercantile or military.  
   
ANNCR: And standing guard at the Gate, Fort Point would be the first  
line of defense against naval attack by foreign fleets. During the Civil  
War, that included Confederate naval vessels and privateers. Look to your  
right, across the Gate. Viewing it this way, across the channel, you can see  
that the Golden Gate is like a sally port, the only passageway between the  
Pacific and San Francisco Bay.  
   
 Now, turn around. Let's walk to the back end of  
this raised area. I want you to take a look at the exhibit on the left. It's  
called, "Defending the Golden Gate."  
   
SFX: [CANNON FIRE]  
   
ANNCR: Look at the picture of a lineup of cannon. Behind the  
exhibit, you'll see a row of circular, rust-marked mounts. That's where the  
eight Columbiads in the picture were actually mounted. Let's walk in that  
direction, toward the flagpole. Take care going down the steps. Move down  
the row of mounts until you're out from under the bridge. You can stand on a  
step between the mounts to get a good view across the channel of the Golden  
Gate. Now look out over the parapet at the channel. If the Golden Gate is  
the sally port, these gun mounts are the banquette, the firing shelf in the  
guardroom. Any ship passing through the channel makes a broadside target for  
guns mounted here.  
   
PRIVATE: But first, the target has to be sighted by a barbette tier  
sentinel.  
   
ANNCR: Turn around and walk towards the flagpole again.  
   
PRIVATE: For all of Fort Point's advanced weaponry, the fate of this  
fabulous bay and city comes to rest on a lone soldier of lowly rank, walkin'  
'round and 'round up here on a cold and blustery evening, eyes watering from  
the wind. The drums beats even mess call and he's hungry but keeps on walkin  
and watchin'. He'd like to duck into the stairwell shelter for a warm-up  
break but keeps on. He sure could use a hot mug of coffee.  
   
SERGEANT: Make your report to the officer of the day at the  
officer's mess before returning to the guardroom. You're relieved. Carry on.  
   
ANNCR: Past the flagpole, around the corner, you'll see another  
wooden penthouse. It shelters the fort's third circular staircase. Keep  
going past the penthouse. Let's go find a warmer spot. Up ahead, at the

corner where this side of the fort meets the land-face side, you'll see an  
iron staircase going down. Use those stairs to go down two flights to the  
second tier. We're going to visit a part of officers' quarters where duty  
did take certain enlisted men. We're going to offices' mess. Turn off your  
tape player before you start down. Restart it two flights down, at the foot  
of the stairs.  
   
 Welcome back. You should be standing at the foot  
of the iron staircase on the second-tier gallery. Turn and face the  
building. Directly in front of you, there's a doorway sign that says,  
"Officers' Mess." Enter that doorway now.  
  
  
 You now should be standing just inside the  
officers' mess. The dining room was here at the front, the kitchen was  
further back, where you see the army cookstove. Walk over for a closer look  
at that stove and the other kitchen furnishings.  
   
SERGEANT: Regulation 120: No persons will be allowed to visit  
kitchens except on duty or occupied as cooks.  
   
ANNCR: Generally, officers' mess was off-limits for enlisted men,  
but certain soldiers were welcome here. For example, a soldier delivering a  
message to an officer here.  
PRIVATE: That's an order, an answer to a soldier's prayers. You know  
there'll be coffee, strong and steaming, in the big pot there, and cook  
who'll offer you a mug.  
   
ANNCR: The cooks who worked in this kitchen were enlisted men. Also,  
some enlisted men worked as waiters for the officers. Now turn and look back  
at the dining room. Just to the right of the doorway, you'll see two exhibit  
stands. The one on the left shows the amount of food a soldier was rationed  
each day.  
   
RODGERS: Officers got more rations than the enlisted men.  
   
ANNCR: Four times as many.  
   
RODGERS: Probably because of their wives.  
   
ANNCR: Wives, children, servants. Officers had more mouths to feed.  
The exhibit just to the right shows a typical enlisted man's menu.  
   
PRIVATE: This is what I eat. Beans, more beans, lots of stew, plenty  
of hash, biscuits and gravy.  
   
ANNCR: Vegetables were mostly in the soup.  
   
SERGEANT: Regulation 117: The soup most be boiled at least five  
hours, and the vegetables always cooked sufficiently to be perfectly soft  
and digestible.  
   
ANNCR: Unlike the enlisted men, officers weren't limited to this  
regulation menu. Married or single, they could afford to supplement army  
fare. The lowest graded officers were paid $45 a month, as compared to $13 a  
month paid to privates through most of the Civil War. Now take some time to  
look around at the other exhibits in this room.  
   
PRIVATE: At 8:45, 15 minutes before lights out, the drums beats a  
tattoo. At this call, no matter where I'm at or what I'm doin', I hightail  
it for the parade, unless of course I'm on guard duty.  
   
ANNCR: Tattoo signals that a soldier's day is nearing its end. This  
call draws the soldiers into the parade for the final roll call of the day,  
the time also for us to leave the officers' mess. Turn back to face the  
cookstove. Just to the left of the cookstove, you'll see a doorway. Use this  
door to exit the officers' mess.  
   
SOLDIER: Fall in!  
   
ANNCR: Outside, turn to your left, walk straight ahead through the  
casemate, continue walking straight ahead past the staircase to your left.  
When you get opposite the open parade, veer to your left. Lean up against  
the railing under the big arch. Look out across the parade for a final view.  
Imagine a night fog settling over the fort, and the lighthouse flashing,  
with each flash briefly illuminating the assembled garrison in the parade  
below.  
   
SERGEANT: The decisive events of a soldier's life are few and far  
between.  
   
ANNCR: The Fort Point soldier waited and watched, but no enemy ship  
ever entered the Golden Gate. No hostile force ever stormed the sally port.  
   
SERGEANT: If the time spent waiting for these events is occupied in  
preparing for the critical moments, he will enhance his chances of success.  
   
ANNCR: He was prepared, but he never once had to fire or be a target  
for an angry shot. And that was his success.  
   
PRIVATE: One more time, I answer roll call.  
   
SOLDIER: Sir, all are present, all accounted for!  
   
PRIVATE: And then I'm one day nearer my discharge.  
   
SOLDIER: Company dismissed!  
   
ANNCR: Thank you for joining us on our tour. Please us the iron   
staircase on the left to go down to the ground level. Return your tape   
player at the doorway where you see the sign. This has been an Antenna   
Production.