

ROCK ALWAYS FORBIDDING SAYS VETERAN

Member of Infantry Outfit of Old Days Depicts Loneliness of Soldiers in Island Vigil

Alcatraz has always been a lonely, forbidding rock.

Fifty-two years ago, before the age of the income tax evading gangster czars and the big time chiselers and kidnapers who now reside on 'The Rock,' it was a place of solitary gloom. It was inhabited by 180 military prisoners, deserters for the most part, and some Apache murderers, guarded by a score of soldiers of the First Infantry Regiment, United States Army.

It still bore the ancient Spanish citadel, the only brick structure, and a handful of wooden buildings—and its contact with the mainland was as small as it now remains.

WAS LONELY PLACE.

"I remember — It was so lonely, for company we used to go down and sit on the rocks by the surf and listen to the sound of children's voices drifting over from Meigs Wharf on the mainland."

So, yesterday, reminisced probably the last surviving member of that score of Alcatraz guards—Marion Louis West, 78, veteran of years of the Indian wars of the last century, now resident at 1200 Newcomb Avenue here.

West, who came here at an early age from Connecticut, began guard duties at Alcatraz in November of 1888, prior to a career of Indian fighting in the Dakotas and Utah.

ONLY FEW LEFT.

"There's old John Carry, who was in the Civil War—and Tom Mitchell—and there's Charlie Workman." Thus West reviews rare old snapshots of comrades long dead. Last week, though, at the United Indian War veterans convention here, he ran into a fellow named Ernest Voos, from Oakland—an old First Infantry friend whom he hadn't seen since 1889, at Angel Island. There's only one other First Infantry man of that era left, to West's knowledge— Charles Soisman, also a San Francisco resident. The rest are— history.