

Alcatraz: The Surprising History of America's Most Notorious Prison

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Alcatraz: The Surprising History of America's Most Notorious Prison Patrick Auerbach The federal prison on Alcatraz Island in the chilly waters of California's San Francisco Bay housed some of America's most difficult and dangerous prisoners during its years of operation from 1934 to 1963. Among those who served time at the maximum-security facility were the notorious gangster Al "Scarface" Capone (1899-1947) and murderer Robert "Birdman of Alcatraz" Stroud (1890-1963).

When prisoners boarded the boat for Alcatraz, they knew that they had reached the end of the line. Not only was this the toughest of all Federal penitentiaries, but it was also said to be virtually escape-proof. The island was a natural fortress, separated from the mainland by a narrow strait of freezing water and deadly currents. This prison was the U.S. government's drastic answer to the lawlessness unleashed under Prohibition, which continued throughout the "Roaring Twenties" and into the teeth of the Great Depression. Alcatraz, with its damp cold and austere isolation, its rigid discipline and strict rule of silence, was as tough as the criminals that were sent there, and by the time the prison closed down in 1963, "the Rock" had indisputably done its job.

The book includes narratives of Alcatraz's most notable inmates who include Robert Stroud (Birdman of Alcatraz), Al Capone, Machine Gun Kelly, Frank Morris, the Anglin Brothers, Doc Barker, Joe Cretzer, Bernard Coy, Miran Thompson, Sam Shockley, among others.

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