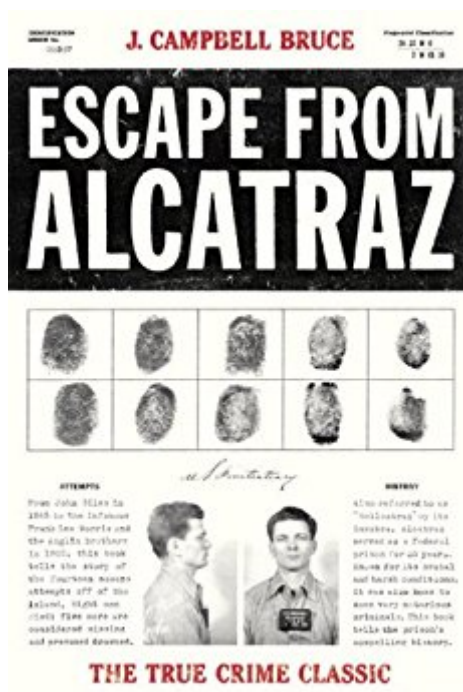


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Escape From Alcatraz



Synopsis

In 1963, just weeks before the original publication of this book, the last prisoner was escorted off Devil's Island and Alcatraz ceased to be a prison. Author J. Campbell Bruce chronicles in spellbinding detail the Rock's transition from a Spanish fort to the maximum-security penitentiary that housed such infamous inmates as Robert Stroud, aka the Birdman of Alcatraz, and mobster Al "Scarface" Capone. The chapters describing the daring escape attempts by Frank Morris and two accomplices from this "inescapable" prison became the basis for the 1979 Clint Eastwood movie. Discover the intriguing and absorbing saga of Alcatraz, whose name is still synonymous with punitive isolation and deprivation, where America's most violent and notorious prisoners resided in tortuous proximity to one of the world's favorite cities. The true-crime classic first published in 1963 is reissued in this special edition. Includes archival photos of the prison and prison life. This story will appeal to Bay Area locals and tourists alike. Alcatraz hosts more than a million visitors each year. From the Trade Paperback edition.

Book Information

File Size: 4871 KB

Print Length: 223 pages

Publisher: Ten Speed Press; Revised ed. edition (March 14, 2012)

Publication Date: March 14, 2012

Sold by: Random House LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B007DCXX0C

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #228,684 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #54

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Politics & Social Sciences > Crime & Criminals > Penology #95 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > True Crime > Hoaxes & Deceptions #148 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > United States > State & Local > West

Customer Reviews

Escape from Alcatraz depicts the full history of this infamous prison stronghold. It reflects how life was on the Rock and details the circumstances when and how 23 convicts attempted or succeeded in escaping from the island prison - the latter few never to be ever seen or heard of again. If you are interested in Alcatraz you need go no further than reading this book - it is really that good !

Most people know of Escape from Alcatraz from the movie starring Clint Eastwood. However, the famous prison has enjoyed a long and colorful history. Written by J. Campbell Bruce, a San Francisco Chronicle newspaperman for over forty years, the book delves into the history and social significance of Alcatraz Island. Beginning with its discovery and subsequent use by Native Americans, the book takes us through the island's history as America's "unescapable" prison. The book's most recognizable chapter, by far, deals with the mystery shrouding the prison's most famous escape attempt. This section of the book became the basis for the film Escape from Alcatraz. The book is very interesting as a historical account of both the island and the San Francisco Bay Area. It comes highly recommended from this reader.

This book was the background for the Clint Eastwood film "Escape From Alcatraz". I thought it would be a good book for info on that breakout. It is much more than that. This book surprised me in two ways. First of all, as a nonfiction book, I did not expect it to be written so that it reads like a novel. It is really well done. I was captivated from the first by Mr. Bruce's description of Frank Morris being transported to Alcatraz to begin his life there as a prisoner. I started turning pages and was transported along with the prisoner - through the rain and fog to that dismal prison. The second surprise was all the history Mr. Bruce put into the book that went way beyond just this one escape. The book turned out to be a real bonus in that regard. He sketches the history of the island and the area, and then goes into some of the background history of Alcatraz. It's a great read all the way around.

A surprisingly good read. I bought this after seeing the movie Escape from Alcatraz. I expected it to be rather dry. It was far from that. It is a fascinating look into the history of Alcatraz from its beginning. Even though it is not fiction, it reads like a novel due to the almost unbelievable lives of the people who were incarcerated there. If you enjoy history and true crime you will enjoy this

J. Campbell Bruce tells the story of the famous island in San Francisco Bay from its "discovery" in the late 1700's to its decommissioning in the 1960's. Understandably, the story focuses on the lurid

period during which Alcatraz was a brutal prison for America's most difficult prisoners. Given its reputation for inescapability the story of Alcatraz features several daring (and some not-so-daring) attempts to escape. Receiving special attention is the attempt by Frank Morris and two accomplices that may or may not have been the sole successful escape from the Rock. The Frank Morris story, with undoubted debt to this book, later became a legendary motion picture under the same name as this book. While far from exhaustive, *Escape From Alcatraz* provides a brief and interesting history of Alcatraz. Some fascinating stories are given only brief mention, e.g. the story of the children of Alcatraz's employees who were raised on the island, most of the relevant players and events are touched upon. The book's special focus on mobster-era prisoners and, especially, possible escapee Frank Morris are understandable and, in fact, quite well done. The narrative of the Morris escape, in particular, reads like a potboiler. Some of the discussion of Alcatraz notables, however, feels a bit gossip columny - more name dropping than content. All in all, a good and quick read for anyone looking for only a brief dip in the frigid waters surrounding Alcatraz.

Escape from Alcatraz would be more appropriately named *The History of Alcatraz*. On most levels, the book is well put together. The number of misspellings is grotesquely unacceptable, but the content is reasonably thorough. The book begins at the discovery of the San Francisco island by Spanish settlers and continues through the closure of the prison. The book documents each of the attempts to break out of Alcatraz. Unfortunately, no inmate is confirmed to have escaped alive from The Rock. Many of The Rock's most famous inhabitants are discussed including Al Capone. I particularly enjoyed the stories of how the inmates passed their time. Bootlegging took on a new meaning in Alcatraz when inmates made pruno. Pruno often included such exotic combinations as milk and gasoline. The book is concluded with the closure of the prison. There is no doubt that Alcatraz was a brutal prison that drove some men insane and others to suicide. While it was not a deterrent to crime, it was an effective punishment for crime. Had the condition of Alcatraz not deteriorated so much since the Civil War, it may still be punishing criminals for their crimes.

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