

Defenders of the Gate: The Soldier’s Story

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The military past of the San Francisco Bay Area is full of fascinating stories and remarkable circumstances. The accounts of soldiers over time have provided us with the compelling historical accounts we have today. Through the endeavors and actions of these individuals, the legacies of the Bay Area’s military history come alive and continue to engage, educate, and evoke memories that will last for years to come.



GOGA 33760

Soldiers have played a vital role in California’s history for hundreds of years. Even before California joined the Union in 1850, soldiers had established a military presence in the Bay Area. From the early Spanish and Mexican occupations in the late 18th and early 19th centuries until the transfer of the U.S. Army’s land to the National Park Service in the late twentieth century, the areas within this large urban park have been home to many men and women who served their country.

What did soldiers do in their down time, how did they spend their days, and how did these individuals defend and protect their fellow citizens during times of war? The answers to these questions are revealed through the Golden Gate National Recreation Area’s amazing collection of documents, objects, and stories held for future generations. While it is impossible to tell every soldier’s story, this exhibit provides a glimpse into the lives of some of the men and women who spent their lives defending the Golden Gate.

Work

For most soldiers, days were spent training, drilling, and following orders. Some men and women held jobs that supported the Army internally, such as teachers, doctors, nurses, cooks, police, and even park patrol.

Life

Even though military life consisted of a regimented daily routine, leisure and recreational activities were popular among the soldiers on post. Many different activities were available to soldiers and later to their families as well.

War

In times of national conflict and crisis, countless individuals took part in the struggles to protect and defend their country. Efforts at home and abroad provide proof of a soldier’s duty to their country.



GOGA-1766



GOGA 17995



GOGA 35256

Top Left: Two soldiers from the 21st Engineering Corps evaluate aerial photographs, c1950s. Top Right: Two soldiers perform during a War Bonds Entertainment Show, 1945. Bottom: Coast Artillery soldiers on lookout, c1941.

Today, the history of this incredible area lives on in the surviving structures and landscape features of the region. This exhibit tells the stories and often-untold histories of those who defended their country, state, and the Bay Area.