



## *PATRIOTIC RECOLLECTIONS*



### Andersonville

By H.H. Hardesty [\(a\)](#)

The ground on which, during the year of 1864, was concentrated the greatest amount of suffering human beings ever endured in one year lies in Sumter County, Georgia. The prison was also known as Camp Sumter, but the name by which its horrors are perpetuated, the name which has become the synonym of cruelty and atrocity, is Andersonville. Its location, near the Southwestern railroad, running from Macon to Americus, and about sixty-five miles south of Macon, was selected in the latter part of 1863 by W.S. Winder. Here, in one year of the war, over thirteen thousand of the sons of the North and West were done to death by Southern cruelty.

### The Winders, and Wirz

John H. Winder, Confederate States General, partisan, friend and tool of Jefferson Davis, was the son of General William H. Winder whose incompetency at Bladenburg in 1814 gave up Washington to the ravages of the British. The worthy son of such a sire gave little field service to the cause of the South. The influence of Davis procured him the appointment of provost marshal of Richmond; he was the prison agent of Davis in Richmond, where his atrocities toward prisoners, and the crimes he committed under the cloak of his office, made him abhorred of the people of Richmond, and brought the influence of the leading generals of the Confederacy to bear upon the war department and secured his removal. A protest against the retention of his services for the Confederacy was entered, but the influence of Davis saved him from the disgrace of removal. He was sent to Goldsboro, North Carolina, to take the field, but after a week or two there was sent to take command of Andersonville prison. The order relieving him from his duty at Richmond was endorsed by Jefferson Davis. "This is unnecessary and uncalled for," and when after a few months Winder had his system of cruelty at Andersonville well established, Davis put the seal of his approval on it by appointing Winder commissioner-general of prisoners, with supreme authority over all prisons east of the Mississippi. Is it possible to doubt at whose door lies the responsibility for the murders at Andersonville? One whose misfortune it was to see too much of him thus describes Winder's first appearance at Andersonville: "There rode in among us, a few days after our arrival, an old man whose collar bore the wreathed stars of a major-general. Heavy white locks fell from beneath his slouched hat, nearly to his shoulders, sunken gray eyes, too dull and cold to light up, marked a hard stony face, the salient feature of which was thin-lipped, compressed mouth, with corners drawn down deeply- the mouth which seems the world over to be the index of selfish, cruel, sulky malignance. It is such a mouth as

has a schoolboy- coward of the playground - who delights in pulling the wings off flies \*\*\*\* The rider was John H Winder, commissioner-general of prisons, Baltimorean renegade, and the malign genius to whose account should be charged the death of more gallant men than all the inquisitions of the world ever slew with the less dreadful rack and wheel. He it was who in August could point to the three thousand and eighty-one new made graves for that month and exultingly tell his hearer that he was *doing more for the Confederacy than twenty regiments* \*\*\* Winder gazed at us stonily for a few minutes without speaking, and turning, rode out again. Our troubles from that hour rapidly increased."

What Andersonville was Winder made it, with the approval of Jefferson Davis. He has himself sent down to posterity the damning evidence of his hellish nature, of his utter destitution of all attributes that make him an honorable enemy, in the following order, issued when it was supposed General Stoneman was approaching Andersonville:

Order No. 13] Headquarters Confederate States Military Prison Andersonville, July 27, 1864

The officers on duty and in charge of the battery of *Florida artillery* at the time will, upon receiving notice that the enemy has approached within seven miles of this post, open fire upon the stockade with grapeshot, without reference to the situation beyond these lines of defense. It is better that the last Federal be exterminated than be permitted to burn and pillage the property of loyal citizens, as they will do if allowed to make heir escape from prison.

W.S. Winder

By order of John H. Winder, Brigadier General, Adjutant General

The maimed and helpless prisoners within the stockade who would have been slaughtered by the execution of this order then numbered more than thirty thousand men. Little wonder the Richmond Examiner, at the time he was relieved there, burst through the censorship the Confederate government was exercising and said with mingled joy and horror "Thank God that Richmond is at last rid of Old Winder; God have mercy on those to whom he has been sent." The further details of the prison tell more than enough of the story of this man. He was suddenly stricken with death January 1, 1865, at Florence, South Carolina, from disease contracted from prisoners. Retributive justice would seem to have demanded a more ignominious death for him. But would our government have meted it out? Howell Cobb, in 1864 military commander of the district in which Andersonville is located, was early pardoned by President Johnson, without having made any expiation for being accessory to Winder's crimes.

W.S. *Sidney* Winder, as he was pleased to style himself, the son of John H. was appointed at his father's request, to go to Sumter county, Georgia and select a prison site. On the 27th of November 1863 he planted the prison, turning from a hundred more healthful locations which were equally at his service, to chose one which would assist in killing off the prisoners. While his father remained at the prison he was his assistant, with the powers of adjutant general. When he selected the site he said "I am going to kill more d---d Yankees than can be destroyed at the front." When the fulfillment of his prophecy was assured , the son said exultingly, "They rot faster than they are sent." the father said, "I am killing off more Yankees than twenty regiments of Lee's army." Captain Richard B. Winder was a nephew of John H. He joined his cousin at the prison soon after the work was begun there, and remained as quartermaster. Under his orders, it was that clothing and food sent from the North and which passed through other detentions, was appropriated outside the gates of Andersonville.

Henry Wirz, holding commission of captain from the Confederate States government, was commandant of the prison, and under Winder had sole authority over all prisoners. To him is directly traced all wanton acts of cruelty that were perpetrated upon the helpless, hapless prisoners. He it was who, when our famishing boys lay hourly dying, moaning with their last gasp for a morsel

of food, daily signed the order: "Give this man all the bread and meat he wants for his dogs;" who shot down prisoners himself and ordered others to do it; who followed bloodhounds when they tracked the escaped down, and refused to have them called off when they were tearing their victims to pieces; who put men in stocks and in the chain gang; who hung them up by their thumbs and stood by while they were flogged who spurned with his boot the dead bodies of those who had been starved at his command. As far as one death can atone for thousands, this man expiated his crime.

When Johnston surrendered to Sherman, Wirz was still at Andersonville. General Wilson, commanding our cavalry, dispatched Captain H.E. Noyes of the 4th United States Cavalry, with a squad of men from Macon to arrest him. The arrest was made on May 7, 1865. Wirz protested that he was protected by Johnson's surrender, and wrote a most servile letter to General Wilson, stating it was his intention to remove with his family to Europe. It was a wise plan for him to put the Atlantic between himself and the survivors of Andersonville. By this letter is seen that he at least, of all the butchers of Andersonville, spares us the shame of being American born. He was a native of Switzerland, and before the war was a physician residing in Louisiana. He claimed to have lost his property in the siege of Vicksburg, and to have lost to a great degree the use of his right arm from a wound received at Seven Pines. He asked at least one pertinent question: "Shall I now bear all the odium? I, who was only the medium, or, I may better say, the tool in the hands of my superiors?"

He was kept at Macon until May 20, when Captain Noyes was ordered to take him and the prison records of Andersonville to Washington. All the way from Macon to Cincinnati our men were guarding the roads, among them everywhere were ex-prisoners, and it was all Captain Noyes and a strong guard could do to get him over the road and away from men who felt they were justified in taking vengeance into their own hands. He was immediately ordered to trial by courts-martial, the court composed of Generals Lewis Wallace, Mott, Geary, L. Thomas, Fessenden, Bragg, and Baller, Colonel Allcock and Lieutenant-Colonel Stibbs; Colonel Chipman was judge advocate. The trial began August 23d, the witnesses examined were Union ex-prisoners, rebel surgeons and soldiers and some residents of Georgia who had for various reasons visited the prison, and he was allowed the privileges always given the accused in this country. The arraignment was on a formidable list of charges and specifications, and accused him of *combining, confederating and conspiring with John H. Winder, Richard B. Winder, Isaiah H. White, W.S. Winder, R.R. Stevenson and others unknown, to injure the health and destroy the lives of soldiers in the military service of the United States, there held and being prisons within the lines of the so-called Confederate States, and in the military prisons thereof, to the end that the armies of the United States might be weakened and impaired, in violation of the laws and customs of war.* The case was closed by the government October 18th, the court, after due deliberation, found the prisoner guilty on all charges and specifications except two unimportant ones, and sentenced him to be hanged at such time as the President might direct. November 2nd President Johnson approved the sentence, and it was carried into effect on Friday, November 10th. The body was buried in the grounds of the Old Capitol Prison, beside that of Azterodt, one of the accomplices in the plot for Lincoln's assassination.

### The Stockade

The Andersonville prison consisted originally of a few buildings used for the storage of quartermasters' and commissaries' supplies. November 27, 1863, W.S. Winder chose the place for his prison pen, and in January following a stockade was built of pine logs about twenty feet high, enclosing an area of some seventeen acres. This prison was named *Camp Sumter* by the rebels, and was intended for the confinement of men of the ranks only. It was opened for reception of its victims in February 1864, and in June following contained more than twenty thousand prisoners. In July the enclosure was enlarged by extending the old stockade forty rods to the north, the work being done by prison inmates. In the same month the crowded prisons at Richmond were relieved of their surplus prisoners, and twenty thousand of them were sent to Andersonville. In the months of July and August, so terrible in that climate, there were some thirty thousand miserable men, sick and well, huddled in a space that gave them each less than four square yards for all the purposes of living and

dying. This statement is based upon a table found among the papers captured at Andersonville, and used in the trial of Wirz. The table shows the area of the stockade in the months of March, April, May, and June 1864 to have been 740,520 square feet. In March, with 7,500 prisoners, the average number of square feet for each man was 98.7; as the number of prisoners increased in the three following months, the space for each dropped 74 feet, 49.3 feet, and in June 33.3. Then the stockade was enlarged, but the number of prisoners increased in about an equal ratio, so that in July each man had 40.5 square feet, in August 35.7 square feet. Such is the Confederate official statement, but it represents things in a better light than they were, since the area divided in the table included the swamp lands, which were absolutely uninhabitable, and useless for every purpose but defecation.

With the addition made in July, the stockade enclosed twenty-three and a half acres, lying in the form of a parallelogram, with the surface somewhat depressed in the center, the elevation being at the northerly and southerly ends. Across this parallelogram, from west to east, and about one-third of the distance from the southerly end of the stockade, ran a sluggish stream of water, six feet in width, and bordered on each side by a low swamp, embracing an area of six acres. This swamp, which was uninhabitable except for the festering vermin and maggots that were afterwards suffered to swarm in its stagnant and loathsome filth, became in time the receptacle of the offal which naturally drained into it from the surface of the camp, as well as wash and waste of the cook-houses and camps outside. Outside of the stockade, near where the stream entered it, the cook-house was located, and further up the rebel guards were accustomed to wash and bath, while closer to the stockade animals were permitted to die and rot in its waters. This stream was the only place, with exception of a few shallow wells and springs, from which the prisoners could procure water for general use, and from its loathsome sewer constantly rose the pestilential vapors for fatal to human life. Where the water entered the stockade it was covered with a mantle of filth, grease, and drippings that constantly floated on it when the creek was at its ordinary stage. Inside of the stockade, the approach to the creek was through the swamp alone, while this in turn was filled with offal of the camp, which was never removed except as it was partially carried out by flooding rains. There were two entrances to the stockade, both on its westerly side, one north and the other south of the stream, secured by strongly constructed double gates. The country round the prison was a pine forest, the place of the camp having been cleared for prison use. In the midst of this abundance of fuel, and with the full knowledge of the highest officials of the Confederacy, Union prisoners of war were compelled to eat raw food, and perish for want of fire and shelter. The camp of the guards was west of the enclosure. They were well sheltered from rain and sun when on duty, in sentry boxes commanding the inside of the prison. On eminences over looking the camp were forts, well equipped with artillery and troops.

### How the Prisoners Lived at Andersonville

The Prisoners confined at Andersonville represented almost every loyal State that had soldiers in the field, were of every grade of society, of every nationality that makes up the population of our cities and towns. They were taken from the field of action everywhere east of the Mississippi, and prison life made strange messmates. The grandson of one who wore the Continental uniform and fired his flint lock musket at the red-coated defenders of tyranny in 1776, was companion in misery with the volunteer of foreign birth, who enlisted before he learned to speak our mother tongue. The student who left his books and the clergyman who left his pulpit were associated with the New York rough whose occupation was prize fighting. The mother's darling from whose face had not departed the brightness of childhood's innocence, and the world hardened, sin encrusted law breaker were together there. The prisoners began to arrive as soon as the pen was ready in February, 1864. The largest number at one time confined there was in August, stated by prison authority to have been 31,693, but as otherwise proven, some five or six thousand more. After the fall of Atlanta the number was reduced, the healthiest of the prisoners being run off to territory less likely to be visited by Sherman's advancing army. When the last of the living prisoners were removed, they left behind them 13,714 graves.

### Clothing

The usual appearance of a prisoner when turned inside of the gates, so far as clothing was concerned, was not much better than that of those who had become regular denizens there, inasmuch as his captors, or the guards through whose hands he had subsequently to pass, usually stripped him of whatsoever he had that pleased their fancy, and their fancy was for everything of value, from the greenbacks in his pocket-book, or the fine-tooth comb he carried, to the very shirt on his back. Sometime, however, when the number of prisoners received was in the thousands, they could come in with their full accouterments, and with their personal property undisturbed. The horror of new prisoners, at the spectacle of the semi-naked, lousy, dirty skeletons representing men who had come there as soldier-like as themselves, had much to do with their succumbing to the despair which made them the prey of disease and death. The appearance of a prisoner who had been two or three months in the stockade will live forever in the memory of any man so unfortunate as to have seen it. Often, on entering prison, the captive was stripped of a part of his clothing, perhaps of every article except shirt and drawers; one of these garments was frequently all that was left him. Exposed thus to all the vicissitudes of the weather, naked or nearly so, skin would be parched by the wind, blistered by the sun, until at last it would look and feel like leather, and the very dirty leather at that, since soap was never seen there. In all the time Andersonville was used as a prison, not one article of clothing was issued by the prison authorities. On the contrary, they appropriated to their own use blankets and clothing sent for the relief of prisoners from the Sanitary and Christian commissions of the North. This was not only the case at Andersonville, but in every other Southern prison. The stores sent by the Sanitary Commission to Andersonville from July to November, 1864 as sworn to by Dr. M.M. March, the agent of the commission at Beaufort, South Carolina, included; 5,052 wool shirts, 6,993 wool drawers, 3,950 handkerchiefs, 601 cotton shirts, 1,128 cotton drawers, 2,100 blouses, 4,235 wool pants, 1,520 wool hats, 2,565 overcoats, 5,385 blankets, 272 quilts, 2,120 pairs of shoes, 110 cotton coats, 140 vests, 46 cotton pants, 524 wrapper, 69 jackets, 12 overalls, 817 pairs of slippers, 3,147 towels, 5,431 wool socks. These supplies were withheld from the prisoners wholly or in part, sometimes their arrival being known to our boys only by seeing the guards appear in their sentry boxes in uniforms and blankets fresh and new, bearing the stamp of the United States or Sanitary Commission. Numerous boxes containing food and clothing were forwarded by friends and relatives of prisoners. Before the pretended delivery was made the prisoners were required to receipt for the box, and then it was made the box would be found robbed of its valuable contents. In many cases after a receipt was obtained, nothing at all was delivered the prisoner. At the time these robberies were perpetrated the pressing necessities of the prisoners were compelling them to strip the dead bodies of their comrades, by which they were not frequently inflicted with disease which had terminated the comrade's life.

*Fresh fish* was the name the habitues of the pen gave new arrivals. The tidings they brought of the advance or defeat of our armies was listened to eagerly by those within and the first question asked them always was "Have you heard anything about our exchange?" When, in the manner already mentioned, any were so fortunate as to escape robbery, and came in moderately well supplied with the usual clothing of civilization, what objects of envy and admiration they were. If one sickened soon, before he had bartered his clothing for food (as they all were forced to do if it were not stolen from them), what greedy eyes, alas! Watched his last moments to seize the precious garments when he ceased to need them. In the latter part of April, 1864, some two thousand prisoners entered the stockade, attired in stylish new uniforms, with fancy hats and shoes. They were the garrison of Plymouth, a seaport of North Carolina, on the Roanoke river, had had an easy service, mostly garrison duty along the seacoast, and had re-enlisted, received their first installment of bounty money, and were to have their veteran furlough in a day or two, when they were captured. They were called *a regiment of brigadier-generals* and the *Plymouth Pilgrims* by the other prisoners. They were greater objects of pity than any others there. Not inured to hardships as were those whose lot had been harder campaigning, their bright anticipations of home lost in the realities of the hell in which they found themselves, they gave up courage when the gates closed on them, never hoped for escape or exchange and, as a consequence, died in great numbers. The subjoined realistic picture is Mr. McElroy's reminiscence of his own *undress uniform* in prison:

"Clothing had now become the object of real solicitude to us older prisoners. The veterans of our crowd, the surviving remnant of those captured at Gettysburg, had been prisoners over a year; the next in seniority, the Chickamauga boys, had been in ten months; the Mine Run fellows were eight months old; and my battalion (taken at Jonesville, forty miles from Cumberland Gap) had had seven months incarceration \*\*\* I can best illustrate the way our clothes dropped off us, piece by piece, like the petals from the last rose of summer, by taking my own case as an example. When I entered the prison I was clad in the ordinary garb of an enlisted man of the cavalry: Soft, comfortable boots, woolen socks, draws, pantaloons, vest; warm, snug-fitting jacket; under and over shirts; heavy great coat, and a forage cap. First my boots fell into cureless ruin: then part of the under clothing retired from service; the jacket and vest followed, their end being hastened by having their best portion taken to patch up the pantaloons, which kept giving out in the most embarrassing places; then the cape of the overcoat was called upon to assist in this repairing. The same insatiate demand finally consumed the whole coat. The pantaloons, or what by courtesy I called such, were a monument of careful and ingenious, but hopeless, patching. The clothing upon the upper part of my body had been reduced to the remains of a knit undershirt. It had fallen into so many holes that it looked like a course 'riddles' through which ashes and gravel are sifted. Wherever these holes were the sun had burned my back, breast and shoulders deeply black. \*\*\*"

"One common way of keeping up one's clothing was by stealing meal sacks. The meal furnished as rations was brought in in white cotton sacks. Sergeants of detachments were required to return these when rations were issued the next day. I have before alluded to the incapacity of the rebels to deal with even simple numbers. It was never very difficult for a shrew sergeant to make nine sacks count as ten. After a while the rebels began to see through this slight of hand manipulation and to check it. Then the sergeants resorted to the device of tearing the sacks in two, and turning each half as a whole one. The cotton cloth gained in this way used for patching, or, if a boy could succeed in beating the rebels out of enough of it, he could fabricate himself a shirt or a pair of pantaloons. We obtained all or thread the same way; raveling half a sack carefully would furnish a couple handfuls of thread. Most of our needles were manufactured by ourselves from bone. A piece of bone, split as near as possible to the required size, was carefully rubbed down upon a brick, and then had an eye laboriously worked through it with a bit of wire, or something else available for the purpose. The needles were about the size of an ordinary size darning needles and answered the purpose very well. Time was with us of little importance.\*\*\* Of course the common source of clothing was the bodies of the dead, and no body was carried out with any clothing on it that would be of service to the survivors. The *Plymouth Pilgrims* who were so well clothed on coming in and were now dying off very rapidly, furnished many good suits to cover the nakedness of older prisoners. Most of the prisoners of the Army of the Potomac were well dressed, and as very many died within a month or six weeks after their entrance they left their cloths in pretty good condition for those who constituted Themselves their heirs, administrators and assigns."

One dwells upon the details of life in Andersonville without knowing which to wonder at most: malignance of the Southern authorities that set at defiance all laws of civilized warfare with the intention of killing their prisoners, or incapacitating them for further service or the resolution of our heroic men to make the best of adverse circumstances and live in spite of them.

### How the Prisoners Died at Andersonville

The record of sickness and death at Andersonville is rendered appalling, not only by the amount of suffering and the dreadful mortality, but the conviction forced upon the most dispassionate investigator that the circumstances attendant upon thousands and thousands of deaths prove they were deliberate murders. Colonel D.T. Chandler, rebel inspecting officer of prisons, made a report upon the condition of Andersonville, August 5, 1864, recommending the removal of General Winder and the appointment of some one in his place, who, in the words of the report "does not advocate

deliberately and in cold blood the propriety of leaving them (the prisoners) in their present condition until their number has been sufficiently reduced by death to make the present arrangement sufficient for their accommodation." This was General Winder's plan, as given by himself to Colonel Chandler. The report of Colonel Chandler says of the horrors of Andersonville, "they are difficult to describe, and a disgrace to civilization." Judge J.A. Campbell, assistant (Confederate) secretary of war, received this report and endorsed it, "These reports show a condition of the things at Andersonville which calls very loudly for interposition of the department in order that a change may be made." It was soon after this report was received that, by order of Davis, General Winder was made "Commissary general and commander of all military prisons and prisoners throughout the Confederate States east of the Mississippi.

### Punishments

These are appropriately considered under the head of causes of death in imprisonment, since the end sought by prison punishment was not discipline, but destruction. The inscription over the graves of many hundreds of long-suffering prisoners should be, *Murdered by inhuman and uncalled-for punishment*. These were inflicted not only for attempts to escape, but for the slightest real or supposed indignity offered a guard or prison official, for the breaking, intentionally or otherwise, of the most trivial and unnecessary rules and for a thousand trivial offenses which the tyrants in charge waited for ever, and made the most of it. Since these were alike in all the Southern Prisons, a description of those in the most general use at Andersonville will avail for all the others.

The Stocks at Andersonville were between Wirz's headquarters and the stockade, and were of two kinds. In the one the prisoner was tied to a wooden frame, with his arms extended and his feet closely tied together, in which position, unable to move either hand or foot, he was compelled to stand, or was laid upon his back during his time of confinement. In the other, the prisoners feet were fastened in a wooden frame, elevated so that it was impossible for him to sit up, the only position he could take being to lie on his back. The stocks were entirely unsheltered, the victims, confined in them for days, usually hatless and coatless, and in enfeeble condition, were exposed to the sun and rain until death relieved them oftener than the guard. Evidenced shows that victims were left in the stocks for hours, even days, after death ended their sufferings.

The Chain Gang was composed usually of twelve or more prisoners placed in two ranks. Their feet were shackled so they could step but a few inches, and a heavy iron collar was put around each man's neck; a heavy chain bound them together, extending from collar to collar, and from shackle to shackle. Each man had a small iron ball attached to one of his legs, and every four dragged a sixty-four pound ball. The prisoners were kept in the chain gang for weeks sometimes, the shackles around the ankles eating flesh to the bone. Afflicted by such bowel diseases as most of all of them were, and no member of the gang being able to move without the rest, the necessities of some of them would keep them all in motion, almost continually, night and day. When one died in the chains, the remainder had to drag his dead body with them until it was the pleasure of the officer or guard to relieve them of it.

Bucking and Gagging was a punishment popular with the torturers. The prisoner was seated on the ground, his wrists tied together over his knees, and a stick was run under his knees and over his arms at the elbows. A gag was placed in his mouth and tied tightly by strings extending back of his head, and he was set in the sun as many hours as suited his keeper.

Spread Eagle was a torture in which the victim was placed on the ground, his arms and legs extended as far as possible and fastened, he was left without food or water until relieved.

The Wooden Horse was a high trestle, on which a gagged prisoner was tied, his hands fastened behind him and his legs drawn apart by ropes tied around his ankles and fastened to a stake driven in the ground.

**Tying up by the thumbs, beating with clubs, pricking by bayonets, standing on barrels in the sun for hours without water, withholding the rations, and other like brutal punishments were common, and deadly in their effects on sick and weak prisoners.**

### **Types of Sickness and Causes**

**The following record of sickness and mortality at Andersonville, and the causes thereof, is gathered entirely from the prison reports, and from the testimony of officers in charge there as given at the trial of Wirz and before congressional committee before referred to. August 1st a reported presented to General Winder by Surgeons White, Hopkins, and Watkins, giving the following seven causes of disease and mortality: "1st, The large number of prisoners crowded together; 2nd The entire absences of vegetables as diet, so necessary as a preventive of scurvy; 3rd The want of barracks to shelter prisoners from sun and rain; 4th, The inadequate supply of wood and good water; 5th, Badly cooked food; 6th, The filthy condition of prisons and prisoners generally; 7th The morbidic emanations from the branch or ravine through the prison, the condition of which cannot be better explained than by naming it a morass of human excrement and mud." The preventative measures advised were: "1st The immediate removal from the prison of not less than fifteen thousand prisoners; 2nd Detail on parole a sufficient number of prisoners to cultivate the necessary supply of vegetables, and, until this can be carried into operation, the appointment of agents along the different lines of railroad to purchase and forward a supply; 3rd The immediate erection of barracks to shelter the prisoners; 4th To furnish the necessary quantity of wood, and have wells dug to supply the deficiency of water; 5th, Divide the prisoners into squads, place each squad under a sergeant, furnish soap and hold the sergeant responsible for the personal cleanliness of his squad; furnish the prisoners with clothing, at the expense of the Confederate government, and if that government be unable to do so, candidly admit our inability, and call upon the Federal government to furnish them; 6th, by a daily inspection of bake-houses and baking; 7th, Cover over with sand from the hillside the entire morass, not less than six inches deep, board the stream or water course, and confine the men to the use of sinks, and make the penalty for the disobedience of such orders severe."**

**No action was taken on this report, and no changes ordered in consequence of it. How easy it would have been to have carried out some of its most important suggested changes, the following testimony shows: Dr. G.L.B. Rice, on duty at Andersonville, August 1864- March , 1865 testified: "I found the stockade in a deplorable condition, I saw a great deal of suffering, filth and everything that was bad and unpleasant. We prescribed by formulas or numbers. I commenced prescribing as I had been in the habit of doing at home, but I was informed I would not be allowed to do that; that they had not the medicines. I was handed a list of medicines we had to use; they were in formulas and numbers from one up to a certain point. It was a new thing to me, and I regarded it as a very unsafe method of practice, \*\*\* If all the surgeons had been sent away, and if the prisoners had got the vegetables they should have had, and more room, a great many more men would have been saved. I had a great many vegetables at home, more than we needed. I offered to go for them. I said they were rotting, and if I could be allowed to go home for a few days I would bring them down for the prisoners, without any charge, or a man could be sent to get them. I said they were going to waste and doing no one any good, and that if they were brought down to the prison they would save many lives. They were not sent for.**

**The extended and carefully kept report of Dr. Joseph Jones, a surgeon of high rank in the Confederate army, and who stood at the head of his profession in Georgia gave the prevailing diseases at Andersonville as scurvy, dysentery, diarrhea, and hospital gangrene. Everyone traceable to want of proper food and to filth. He reported his belief that nine-tenths of the mortality was due, directly or indirectly, to scurvy. This terrible disease is thus described: It manifested itself first in the mouth; the breath becomes unbearably fetid; the gums swell until they protruded, livid and disgusting, beyond the lips; the teeth become so loose they frequently fell out, and the sufferer would pick them up and set them back in their sockets. The gums would break away in chunks, that were swallowed or spit out. Frightful, malignant ulcers appeared in other parts of the body, the ever**



present maggot flies laid eggs in these, and soon worms swarmed therein. The last change was ushered in by the lower part of the legs swelling, the legs stiffening at the knees and at the ankle joints, the feet becoming useless, the leg at the bottom swollen larger than the thigh. A case of scurvy was hopeless when this change began. Want of vegetables was the cause of scurvy, but when the ladies of Andersonville, moved by the horrors of which they heard, waited on General Winder with offers of vegetables to be delivered at the gate, they were refused, with his sanction, by Quartermaster W.H. Winder, and the ladies driven away by such language which will not bear repetition here. Every morning after roll call the doctors entered the south gate and made form pretense of examining and prescribing for the sick who came to them. As their time and number was limited, and as their patients were in the thousands and their remedies such as have already been described, it is questionable whether more sickness was not generated than healed by this crowding together of all diseases, more deaths caused than prevented. Over the burning sand and under the burning sun would hobble the scorbutics, with distorted limbs; groups of three or four, themselves so weakened they would hardly walk, would come bringing an emaciated comrade in a blanket, the victim of some bowel trouble, too weak to walk at all; others, less fortunate in friends, would crawl over the ground when they could neither walk or stand. Many would come at the expense of hours of slow, agonizing movement and then not receive a word nor a look. Morning after morning they would repeat this journey, until some day, Death's hand would kindly touch them. A half an acre covered with human beings suffering from all hideous forms of disease, scurvy, and diarrhea, dysentery and fever, exposure and hunger; emaciation and pollution everywhere. What could twenty physicians, with the best intentions, do for twelve thousand such men as these.

#### Murders - The Dead Line - The Dogs

Inside the stockade, parallel with its lines and about fifteen feet from them, was the dead line, marked by a scantling nailed on a post, the posts placed at regular intervals. It was indeed the line of death, to pass which, to touch which, even brought the extreme penalty on any and all without regard to circumstances. The penalty was inflicted upon the tottering sick and the strong and well. On the sane and demented; on the staggering wretch whose failing limbs made him the unwilling victim, and the suffering maniac who neither knew nor dreaded his danger. The burning thirst of the fevered patient, which impelled him to reach beneath it for a drop of purer water than the stagnant pool, was quenched in death by the restless rifle of the guard; the ignorant prisoner newly captured and who had learned its dread significance, fell by the same merciless hand.

The first man killed after its establishment was a half-crazed German, wearing the white crescent of the Second Division, Eleventh Army Corps, nicknamed *Sigel*. He spied an old piece of cloth lying within the dead line, stooped down and reached after it, and instantly a charge of ball and buck tore through his body. He fell back dead, clutching the dirty rag that had cost him his life. For water that was the least bit less filthy a prisoner would risk his life. For weeks a man a day would be killed at the spot along the dead line where the creek entered the stockade. Whatever apprehension there might be felt when prisoners gathered at the dead line in any other part of the pen that they meditated designs on the stockade, here their object was unmistakable. They were reaching for a drink of water, and if their arm appeared beyond the line they were shot. It is the belief of every former prisoner in Andersonville that a guard obtained a thirty-day furlough for every *Yankee* shot. The guards themselves asserted that was the fact, and it would be quite in accordance with the rest of the prison management. One day in May, a poor one-legged cripple let fall his crutch and put his hand on the dead line, to steady himself while he picked it up. A guard instantly shot him, the ball passing through his lungs. All the morning he lay writhing in the clutches of death, and the guard, with reloaded musket, threatened every man who from motives of pity advanced toward him. One day in August one of the *fresh fish*, who had just come in the north gate went to the creek to drink slipped and fell his head striking about six inches within the dead line. Wirz was standing near, and halloed to the sentry, cursing him for not shooting, and the sentry then fired, the shot entering the top of the man's head, and coming out of the back of his neck. He fell dead in the creek, from which the prisoners took him away when Wirz moved away. Hundreds of such occurrences could be cited to

prove the malignance of these murders, and the purpose animating those who allowed and encouraged them. Nor did the guards always confine themselves to the order, frequently in a spirit of mischief shooting beyond the line into a hut, killing one or more. No record shows that a sentry was ever punished or reprimanded for such an act. As the prisoners grew more desperate the favorite method of suicide was to step across the line, and invite death, which always followed.

When courage or desperation of a prisoner led him to determine upon death or escape, the dogs were his greatest dread. Guards and patrols could sometimes be circumvented, the dogs were more unerring. If the hounds kept at Andersonville were evaded by taking to the water or the swamp, another pack was sure to get the trail before the fugitive could reach God's country. The laws of Georgia and the decisions of its high courts, had many years sustained the right to hunt down fugitive slaves with hounds. From hunting black men to hunting down white men was a shorter step. The whole of Southern Georgia was patrolled in 1864, and doubtless other parts of the South, by provost marshals with guards and dogs, hunting down negroes and deserters and many Union prisoners who might otherwise have escaped, were thus retaken. One could not travel on any road without a pass, and every road was patrolled by men and dogs. At Andersonville were two or more packs, each pack made up of two blood hounds and from thirty to forty mongrels. It was the first thing of interest every morning to listen to the packs as they went yelping round the pen, searching for tracks. In this way the prisoners knew if any new tunnels had been opened during the night.

Hunting with hounds was one of the favorite recreations of the amiable Wirz, of whom a prisoner said: "He is the most even tempered man I ever knew. He is always foaming mad." He had a favorite pack, owned and managed by one Wesley W. Turner, who had land near Americus, but boasted that he could make more money hunting Yankees than out of all the land in Georgia. The pack was kept in good quarters outside the stockade, liberally fed, and was seldom without their daily exercise in tracking down some desperate wretch. It is the universal testimony that when Wirz accompanied the hunt the dogs were allowed to bite and tear the captured after they yielded much more than when he did not. Sometimes men were torn in pieces and left in the woods; some times they were brought back without being bitten, but put in the stocks or otherwise punished; oftenest they were bitten more or less in the severely, brought back and turned into the stockade or left in the hospital without treatment until they died, *as a warning*.

#### The Rates of Mortality - Treatment of the Dead - Burial

In March, 1864, of 4,703 prisoners, 283 died, a daily average of 9; in April, of 9,577, 592 died, a daily average of 19; in May, of 18,434 prisoners, 701 died, an average of 23 daily; in June, of 26,367 prisoners, 1,202 died, a daily average of 40; in July, of 31,678 prisoners, 1,742 died, a daily average of 56; in August, of 31,963, 3,076 died, a daily average of 99; in September, of 88,218 prisoners, 2,790 died, a daily average of 90. On the 23rd of August 127 died, or one man every eleven minutes. On September 16th one hundred and nineteen deaths occurred. The deaths for eight months in proportion to the number of prisoners were as follows: In April one in every sixteen died; in May one in every twenty-six; in June one in every twenty-two; in July one in every eighteen; in August one in every eleven; in September one in every three; in October one in every two; in November one in every three. The greater proportionate mortality in the last three months will be understood when it is remembered that Sherman's advance threatened to stop the sport at Andersonville, and all the prisoners who could have possibly borne arms were hurried off to be killed in safer places. It was intended to leave only those whom he could bury. In six months 565 deaths were recorded as from causes unascertained. In other words, the patients died without having any medical attendance, without having had their cases diagnosed at all. They died of starvation and filth. Died and made no sign. They died of enteric diseases, chronic or acute diarrhea or dysentery, brought on by the irritation of the bowels caused by coarse meal *ground cob and all*. As our boys so often tell it; or they died of scurvy, aggravated, prolonged and made fatal by the absence of vegetable food, when vegetables were brought to the very gates for them and refused. Think of it, 13,714 men between eighteen and forty-five years of age, the hope, the pride, the mainstay of our Republic. More men

than fought and won some of the most brilliant engagements of the war, penned into thirteen acres of swamp and filth, and put out of the way by starvation.

In the stockade, the dead were found in a great variety of places. Sometimes they were lying beneath their rude shelters with comrades, the time of their departure unknown even to him by whose side they were lying. The prisoners generally died without a struggle, and apparently without pain; they were so wasted by disease and famine that the spirit parted from its earthly tenement as quietly as the flame sinks among its embers. Sometimes they crawled into the hole they had excavated for shelter, and lay there, *unknelled uncoffined, and unknown*, until the stench arising from their decay, or missing them at roll call led to a search that discovered them. Sometimes they died in an effort to drag themselves to the swamp to quench their thirst, or to the south gate hoping to gain relief. Sometimes they had thrown themselves beyond the dead line, and invited death. In the early morning the dead of the preceding day and night were gathered up under the direction of the division sergeants, and laid of the road leading to the south gate and near the dead line. When the gate was opened at eight o'clock they were taken up, one by one, placed on a hand stretcher, and carried to the dead house. At these times there was always a large crowd gathered round the dead, disputing over the right to carry the bodies out, their quarrels frequently coming to blows. For those who secured this ghastly privilege were able to collect a few sticks of the wood which lay between the hospital and the stockade, and the preservation of their own lives sometimes depended on the fuel so secured.

The dead house was located in the southwest corner of the hospital enclosure, and was formed by setting four posts in the ground and nailed boards on them to the height of six feet. A piece of canvas was stretched over it for a roof, an opening left for an entrance on the west side. To this *house* all the dead were removed, from the hospital and stockade, until, in August, the number of daily dead increased so that the dead-house would not hold them. The bodies from the stockade were then placed in a row, or in rows under the awning of pine boughs, just outside the defenses and near the road to the cemetery. There they remained in the hot sun, or the storm, until their turn for burial. There was to be seen the final result of the Andersonville regimen in all its fullness - the fruit of the *natural agencies* that were to reduce our armies faster than bullets. The scene will not bear delineation.

The men who died in the hospital were carried out by the nurses of the wards to which they belonged, and placed in the streets in front of the tents, whenever, at any time of the day or night, they were found, in heat or in rain. There the bodies remained until the two men appointed for the purpose came round with the stretcher and carried them to the dead house. The dead and the living lay side by side in the hospital till nurses came round, and it was frequently hours before they were separated. In August, when the daily average of deaths was ninety-nine, over three thousand bodies were deposited in or around the dead house for burial, a number exceeding by more than one thousand the largest brigade engaged in the battle of Stone River, and seven-eighths as many as VanCleve's entire division in that battle. The dead-cart came for the bodies in the early morning, an army wagon without covering, drawn by mules, driven by a colored man. The bodies were tossed into the cart without regard to order or decency, piled one upon another like so many sticks. With arms and legs hanging over the sides, with their heads striking one against the other, the cart was driven at a rattling rate over stumps and in and out of holes in the ground, and so the dead we would have delighted to honor were taken to their burial.

The cemetery was located northeast of the stockade and nearly a mile from the hospital. Nature at least was kindly in making the chosen place a pleasant one. The ground slightly sloped to the northwest and the forest of pines round about murmured a constant requiem. Trenches, running north and south, were dug, four feet deep, six wide and long enough to bury the dead for the day, and a squad of paroled prisoners were detailed for the work. The bodies, still in the few poor rags in which death found them, or naked, if a comrades necessities had taken their last clothing, were placed in the trench close to one another, their faces toward the east, and the earth was thrown in, only warm covering the South had given them. Neither prayer nor tear hallowed the ceremony. A

little mound a foot in height was placed over each body, a stake branded with the number on a label which had been on the breast of the deceased was placed at the head of each, and the work was done. The number on the stake referred to a register kept in the office of the chief surgeon by Dorence Atwater, a paroled prisoner. The register was secretly carried away by him, and furnish to our War Department. To him we owe the knowledge, we have to the soldiers buried there. In this register he recorded, where it was possible to ascertain the facts, name, rank, company, regiment, date of death and disease, of each one was buried. Some died in the stockade refusing to give their name and of such only the number is recorded, but Mr. Atwater's care it is due that only nine hundred and twenty-one graves are marked *Unknown* at Andersonville, out of the thirteen thousand seven hundred and fourteen buried there. That noble and patriotic woman, Miss Clara Barton, has had Andersonville cemetery placed in order since the war.

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(a) H.H. Hardesty. 1888. *Ohio in the War*.

Submitted by:

Donald E. Darby

National Patriotic Instructor

Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

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