

RESEARCHING ANDERSONVILLE PRISONERS, GUARDS, AND OTHERS

by Robert S. Davis

BACKGROUND: Confederate Camp Sumter, Andersonville Post Office, Anderson Station, on the Sumter-Macon County line, served as a prison camp from late February 1864 to early May 1865. Today, Andersonville National Historic Site, 496 Cemetery Road, Andersonville, GA 31711 (www.nps.gov/ande) Tel: (912) 924-0343, operated by the National Park Service, still serves as an active national cemetery and has a museum dedicated to all American POWS.

Many family stories mistakenly place relatives at Camp Sumter. The Civil War and the Confederate States of America had other prisons. Andersonville's inmates almost exclusively consisted of federal sailors, privates, civilians, corporals, and sergeants. The only officers held there had commanded African-American soldiers. Officer's prisons included Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia, and Camp Oglethorpe in Macon, Georgia.

Andersonville did hold the greatest number and concentration of inmates to its time, or for generations afterwards. Almost 40,000 prisoners entered the camp of which 12,949 died there. Built to accommodate only 9,000 inmates, at its height, it held 33,006 men. Prisoners lived in filth and sickness, while trying to subsist on starvation rations. The breakdown in the prisoner exchange agreements between the warring sides and the type of administrative incompetence and fraud common to both sides created this humanitarian disaster. The most notable histories of the prison include Ovid Futch, *History of Andersonville Prison* (1968); William Marvel, *Andersonville: The Last Depot* (1994); Edward F. Roberts, *Andersonville Journey* (1998); and John W. Lynn, *800 Paces to Hell: Andersonville* (1999).

The Andersonville National Historic Site has a database of information on persons at Andersonville. The database indicates if additional information for a prisoner can be found in the library of Andersonville National Historic Site. The library gladly accepts donations of material relating to the history of the prison and any persons connected with it.

PERSONS AT ANDERSONVILLE AND OTHER CONFEDERATE PRISONS:

The late Jack Lundquist spent fifteen years preparing a database of all known Union Civil War prisoners of war as well as members of the Andersonville garrison, guards, and staff. The database is presently accessible for free from the website Civil War Prisons:

<http://www.civilwarprisoners.com/dedication.php>

OTHER INTERNET SOUCES: Internet web sites that can be used to identify persons at Andersonville include Familysearch.com, Genforum, Genweb, HeritageQuest, Rootsweb, Ancestry.com, and Genealogylibrary.com. Most of these sites can allow searches by keyword, even by using the subject word as a surname. Also see Andersonville Confederate Prison POW Archives:

<http://www.andersonvillepowcamp.com/>

Dozens of Andersonville prisoners published accounts of their experiences and unpublished writings exist in manuscript repositories across the country. No complete bibliography of this material exists although Ronald J. Caldwell, "Andersonville: A Bibliography" is extensive:

<http://www.gsw.edu/~library/Andersonville.htm>

First Search (OCLC) and Archive Grid (RLIN) accesses information on millions of volumes and manuscript collections. Questia, Making of America (Cornell University), and Making of American (University of Michigan) allow word searches of millions of printed pages. Search engines on other web sites, such as Newspaperarchive.com, Augustaarchive.com, and Ancestry.com now scan images of newspapers, allowing the search of decades of newsprint at the speed of light.

In addition to these sources and other resources cited below, Andersonville researchers seek answers and exchange information on a number of Internet Civil War web sites, such as the American Civil War Home Page, Civil War Home Page. and the Andersonville chat room on rootsweb.com. A site devoted to Andersonville in all of its incarnations is:

http://www.geocities.com/aville_online/?200631.

PRISONERS (OTHER SOURCES): Many of the records of Camp Sumter survive because they were seized as evidence for use in the trial of the prison's Captain Henry Wirz. Among these documents can be found the most complete original roster of Andersonville prisoners, "Original Register of Federal Prisoners of War Confined at Andersonville, Ga. 1864-5," microfilm roll 1 of *Andersonville Confederate Prison Records, 1864-1865* (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1303), Record Group 249. This microfilm also includes hospital and dead lists. These records omit some soldiers, especially from the early days of the camp. Misspelled names and even some aliases appear in this record. Lists of the prison's known dead have been published many times, most notably in *The Roll of Honor* series.

The National Archives and Records Administration, 700 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20408-0001 has extensive records on prisoners of war, including claims for money due for commutation of rations, in Records of the Commissary of Prisoners of War, Record Group 249. The latter documents show money paid to men for rations they failed to receive because of their confinement as prisoners of war. Few of the records in RG 249 have been microfilmed, including the alphabetically arranged slips of paper that summarize the prisoner records in Entry 108.

The National Archives also has military service records. When a soldier has a captivity record, it appears on a thin sheet of paper in an envelope in the soldier's National Archives compiled service record. The Broadfoot Company has published lists of the service records by state or unit type as Janet B. Hewett, comp., *The Roster of Union Soldiers 1861-1865* (33 vols. 1998). The federal pension records, also at the National Archives, frequently contain information on captivity. For more information on related

records see Kenneth W. Munden and Henry Putney Beers, *The Union: A Guide to Federal Archives Relating to the Civil War* (Washington, 1986).

The Brooklyn Historical Society in Brooklyn, New York, has original hospital records of Andersonville that have never been microfilmed. These documents must be used in person and by appointment.

GUARDS AND CAMP PERSONNEL (OTHER SOURCES): The Andersonville National Historic site has files on guards, camp personnel, and other persons associated with the prison. Many of the camp personnel also have files in *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Generals and Staff Officers and Non-Regimental Enlisted Men* (National Archives microfilm M331), Record Group 109.

For most of Andersonville's history the guards consisted of the Second Brigade of the Georgia Reserves (First through Fourth regiments) and the members of the Fifty fifth Georgia Volunteer Infantry Regiment absent when most of the regiment suffered capture at Cumberland Gap. Other units that served at the prison, at different times, included the Fifty seventh Georgia Confederate Infantry, local Georgia militia units, the Twenty seventh Alabama Confederate Infantry Regiment, Gamble's/Dyke's Florida Artillery, and Furlow's Militia Battalion.

The National Archives has compiled service records of most of the Confederate soldiers. These files have a comprehensive index by the Broadfoot Company: Janet B. Hewett, *The Roster of Confederate Soldiers 1861-1865* (16 vols. 1996). The individual service records for Georgia troops have been microfilmed in *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations From the State of Georgia* (National Archives microfilm M266), Record Group 109. Individual service records of the Fifty fifth and Fifty sixth regiments also appear in volume five of Lillian Henderson, *Roster of the Confederate Soldiers of Georgia* (1960). Lengthy lists of deserters from the Georgia Reserves appeared in the *Macon Daily Telegraph* newspaper for October 1864. For other Georgia records see the Alphabetical Card Catalog [of Confederate service] on microfilm at the Georgia Archives in Morrow. Records of the Florida soldiers appear in David W. Hartman, *Biographical Rosters of Florida's Confederate and Union Soldiers* (1995) and *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations From the State of Florida* (National Archives microfilm M251), RG 109. The service records for Alabama soldiers appear in *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations From the State of Alabama* (National Archives microfilm M311), RG 109.

Reminiscences by Georgia guards and civilians of Andersonville survive in many places including in *Confederate Reminiscences and Letters* (20 vols. to date, 1995-) and the Civil War Miscellany Collection, Georgia Archives. The Alabama Department of Archives and History has a file of material on the Twenty-sixth Infantry.

OTHER: The greatest record of Andersonville, although filled with prejudiced and perjured testimony, survives as the trial testimony of Captain Heinrich "Henry" Wirz, a Confederate officer of the prison. Witnesses included civilians, guards, and inmates; the

complete transcript of the trial is file MM2975, RG 153 Records of the Bureau of Military Justice, in the National Archives and Records Administration. The best of the many publications on the testimony from the trial in print is the Trial of Henry Wirz (Washington, 1868). For names of some of the witnesses from that work see "Andersonville Testimony," *Georgia Genealogical Society Quarterly* 31 (1995): 163.

