

Fifteen Months in Fort Delaware:

The Prison Diary of Isaac Handy

By Karen Stokes

Introduction

In 1863, Reverend Isaac William Ker Handy (1815-1878), a civilian clergyman, was incarcerated at Fort Delaware as a political prisoner of the United States government. He was a middle-aged man close to fifty years old, and his health suffered during his confinement, but during the fifteen months he was held at Fort Delaware, he kept a diary in which he faithfully recorded his experiences and observations. After the war, it was published, and now serves as a useful and reliable source of information on the conditions at the prison from July 1863 to October 1864. The diary, more than 600 pages long, is an almost-daily recounting of incidents and conditions at this wartime Federal prison camp. While imprisoned, the clergyman kept his writings carefully hidden, and many were smuggled out of the prison in increments and preserved by his wife, who was allowed to visit him.

During the War Between the States, Rev. Handy pastored a church in Portsmouth, Virginia, an area under Union control after its capture in 1862. In June of 1863, he was issued a special pass by the Federal officer in



Reverend Isaac Handy

command at Portsmouth to go behind Union lines to visit family and friends in the state of Delaware. Early one morning in July 1863, while a guest at a relative's home in Sussex County, Delaware, Handy was awakened by strange voices downstairs. He immediately suspected that he was about to be arrested, and sure enough, within minutes, a United States Army officer appeared in his room and took him

into custody. The officer then escorted the minister to the railroad depot and accompanied him on the train to Delaware City. At the city wharf, Rev. Handy was put on a boat that took him to Fort Delaware, a prison where he would be confined for more than a year.

What was Handy's crime? In a private conversation, he had made remarks critical of the United States government, and several weeks later, discovered that some of them had been reported in a newspaper. An anonymous letter to the editor, which distorted his actual comments, accused him of "treason" and falsely stated he had been a chaplain in the Confederate Army. It also reported Rev. Handy as saying that "He did not regard the American flag any more than a rag, for it belonged to a Government of tyranny and oppression."

What Handy had in fact expressed was his opinion that the flag of the United States no longer stood for its original high ideals. "It is not the old flag," he had remarked in conversation. "The symbols are the same — but the *principles* are changed! What is a flag — irrespective of principles? It is simply a painted rag. That flag once

represented high, and noble principles...But what mean those stars and stripes, today? Not, certainly, what they once meant." For expressing this opinion, Handy was arrested and imprisoned without trial.

Fort Delaware, located in the state of Delaware in the middle of the Delaware River, was constructed in the 1850s on a marshy island, or rather a mud shoal, called Pea Patch Island. A massive pentagonal structure of granite and brick, it was surrounded by a wide moat. The walls of the fort enclosed a large parade ground, and a hundred and fifty-six guns were mounted in its casements, guarding both sides of the Delaware River. The acreage of Pea Patch Island had been reclaimed from swamplands by the building of levees, and when it rained sufficiently, the loamy, spongy soil became an unhealthy quagmire of mud and filth.

The fort was adapted for use as a prison in the early years of the War Between the States. Inside its walls, casemates for the guns were floored to be used as prison cells, and outside, wooden sheds were constructed to accommodate the growing number of prisoners of war. Rooms in the garrison barracks inside the fort were set aside for Confederate officers of higher rank and political prisoners. In the spring of 1863, an expanded complex of wooden barracks was built to house 10,000 prisoners. A 600-bed hospital was also built outside the fort.

The wooden barracks were barely finished when the first Confederate prisoners from Gettysburg and Vicksburg arrived in July 1863, and the prisoners housed in them were grouped in administrative "divisions," numbering up to one hundred

men. The enclosed yard, or pen, for the Confederates line officers was an area of about two acres containing the barracks and a mess hall. It was surrounded by a high wooden fence and was directly under the guns of the fort. There was a larger, adjacent prison pen for the private soldiers, and it was separated from the officers' area by an alley and two plank fences topped by catwalks, where sentries walked and kept watch night and day. A number of drainage ditches ran in all directions across the prison yards. Their brownish-green, nearly stagnant waters, controlled by flood gates, served to float off the waste and offal of thousands of prisoners, sometimes barely adequately.

In addition to prisoners of war, there were also a number of political prisoners held at Fort Delaware. After the war began, President Abraham Lincoln suspended the writ of *habeas corpus*, and during the course of the conflict, thousands of citizens (mostly Northerners) were arrested and incarcerated in various prisons. Thomas J. DiLorenzo, author of the book *Lincoln Unmasked*, wrote "virtually anyone who opposed [the Lincoln] administration policies in any way was threatened with imprisonment without due process."

For nearly a year, Rev. Handy resided with the other political prisoners and Confederate officers who were kept within the walls of the fort. These captives were somewhat better off for food and shelter than the prisoners of war. On August 4, 1863, the clergyman described an incident which illustrated the difference in the treatment of those inside the fort and the prisoners kept outside its walls:

A number of prisoners came into the Fort-yard this morning, to get water, and to remove some bedding. Several of them crowding into a recess, out of sight of the sentinels, we soon found that the poor fellows were suffering for food, and two or three of our party threw them something to eat. The supply of bread, in all the rooms, seemed tolerably full, and we succeeded in getting a dozen or more loaves, which were thrown out to the sufferers in halves and quarters. It distressed me, to see the eagerness with which they threw up their hands, to catch at every piece

Rev. Handy believed that taking the oath of allegiance to the United States was tantamount to giving approval to the war. He called himself "a prisoner for conscience' sake," and refused to yield, although by taking the oath, he could have secured his release. His diary mentions at least two political prisoners who did so and were allowed their freedom.

Rev. Handy often marveled at the ferocity with which the North conducted its war against the Confederacy, and Northerners' extreme "bitterness toward the South," noting that "the extermination of the [Southern] race is not, with them, a mere matter of talk." He was especially dismayed by the vicious sentiments that emanated from Northern pulpits and religious publications.

Though Rev. Handy was sometimes
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vices he observed among the Confederate prisoners, he was often pleased by the many prisoners who were receptive to his preaching, or who showed an interest in the Christian Association. From the beginning of his incarceration, religious services by Handy were nearly a daily occurrence, and he never failed to note them in his diary. The spiritual welfare of the men to whom he ministered was continually uppermost in his mind and heart. Even after Handy's departure from Fort Delaware in late 1864, the Christian Association he helped to organize was still in operation. A handwritten prison newspaper of April 1865 called *The Prison Times*, which included short articles, advertisements for tailoring, barbering, and other services, and notices concerning debate and chess clubs, also prominently featured a "Christian Association Directory."

Eventually, in May 1864, Rev. Handy was moved out of the fort into the wooden barracks of the Confederate officers, where he continued his ministry. One of these officers, Captain Henry C. Dickinson of Virginia, recorded his impressions of the clergyman in his diary:

At Fort Delaware, Rev. Dr. Handy ... was a political prisoner and had daily service in Division 34, assisted by several gentlemen ... At first I really felt an aversion toward Doctor Handy, on account of his long, woman's grey hair, which he tucked up at night, and I think must have been lousy, but, aside from this weakness, I found he was really a good man and became well acquainted with him.... He was a true Southern man possessed of more than ordinary intellect; though his health was delicate, he had prayer meetings daily and quite a number were added to the Church. The occasion of receiving the new members into the Church was very solemn and imposing, and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was afterwards administered to a very large number.

Though there were Union prisons with far higher mortality rates, Rev. Handy's diary contains frequent ob-

servations about deaths at Fort Delaware, and he often records seeing the bodies of dead prisoners being carried out of the pen for burial. He recorded on September 20, 1863:

Twenty-six bodies of Confederate prisoners were carried over to Jersey, this morning — one of them being that of a man who attempted to escape, by swimming the river. He was washed ashore, with several canteens attached to his person. His eyes were eaten out, indicating that he had been drowned several days.

Because of the marshy ground of Pea Patch Island, the bodies were buried in mass graves in New Jersey. General Schoepf, the commandant, later claimed in his own defense, "The number of deaths rendered it impossible to dig a grave for each body separately."

The officers who inhabited the wooden barracks outside the fort did not live as well as the political prisoners and officers inside the fort, but they were somewhat better off than the privates, since they were generally better educated, and tended to have more contacts on the outside to whom they could write for help, especially those who came from rich or well-connected families. Captain Henry C. Dickinson recalled that "Many of the officers ... had friends in the North, who sent them various articles of food." They could also purchase food and other comforts from the prison sutlers (provisioners who sold goods to the prisoners). The unfortunate prisoners who had no money were forced to live off the food and supplies doled out by the authorities.

The Confederate enlisted men would sometimes try to get messages about their treatment and condition to the officers by throwing notes over the fence that divided their pens. In late April 1864, Rev. Handy copied one of these messages into his diary. It informed the officers of the desperate situation of the privates, and was signed, "A Hungry Rebel."

Later, on June 22, 1864, Handy recorded in his diary:

Our rations are now a small piece of bread and meat, each, and a cup of water at breakfast; and at about four o'clock P.M. the same quantity of bread and meat ... with the addition of a cup of rice soup. The soup is so bad — being often filled with flies and dirt — that I never use it

Even in a place like Fort Delaware prison the captives had to maintain a sense of humor, and there was a standard joke among the prisoners about the horrible soup they were given to eat that often had dead flies and worms in it. The joke was, that the soup was so weak and devoid of nourishment that these creatures had not drowned in it, but had died of starvation.

The reality of starvation, however, was no laughing matter. According to historian Charles W. Sanders, the author of *While in the Hands of the Enemy*, a US Army surgeon who made an inspection of the prisoner of war camp at Fort Delaware reported that from November 1, 1863, to February 1, 1864, there were 365 cases of scurvy occurring in the prisoner population, and that some prisoners had died from this disease of malnutrition. On the other hand, scurvy was almost unknown among the prison guards and other members of the fort's garrison. To make matters worse, later in 1864, the United States government adopted a policy of retaliation against Confederate prisoners, reducing their rations even more severely.

In a memoir, George H. Moffett, a Confederate private imprisoned at Fort Delaware, recalled seeing a printed order or bulletin posted in the pen, "emanating from the War Department at Washington."

I read it, then reread it again and again until its contents so blistered themselves upon my memory that the scars are still legible. Hence, there can be no mistake in my recollection of it. It began by reciting that it was "a retaliatory measure" in retaliation for hardships imposed upon Union soldiers confined in Rebel prisons, and then proceeded with instructions to commanders of Federal prison



posts to reduce the diet of Rebel prisoners under their charge to one-fourth of the regulation allowance for army rations, and to allow no luxuries nor permit surplus comforts. The order was signed "E. M. Stanton, Secretary of War," and was attested by "A. Schoepf, Brigadier General Commanding" and by "G. W. Ahl, Assistant Adjutant General."

When I read it, I could scarcely believe my own eyes. Was it possible that there was a civilized government on earth willing to place itself on record in practicing such an enormous barbarity? But there it was in legible characters posted up against the outside wall of the mess hall, near the entrance, in full view of all who cared to stop and read it.

On August 10, 1864, Edwin M. Stanton, the U.S. Secretary of War, ordered the elimination of package deliveries to prisoners. In September 1864, Rev. Handy noted the effects of this order:

Since the embargo on boxes, we have had a constant complaint of hunger. Some men require a great deal more food than others, and these are suffering more or

less, all the time, as the Yankee allowance is barely enough, even for those whose appetites are not so keen.

The order of August 10 also placed restrictions on trade with the prison sutlers. These restrictions were strictly enforced for a while, but were apparently relaxed at Fort Delaware after a matter of weeks. It is evident from letters written in September and October 1864 by an imprisoned officer, Gabriel E. Manigault, and from entries of the same period by Rev. Handy, that prisoners with enough money could still buy food and other comforts from the sutlers during that period.

Conditions continued to be difficult for the private soldiers at Fort Delaware. In his entry for August 25, 1864, Rev. Handy recorded another note that the hungry privates got over the fence into the officers' pen. A soldier who called himself "A Gettysburg prisoner" wrote the following:

We have not only been robbed of our money, clothes, and eatables; but of that also which the Government allows. Yes-

terday we were shoved out [of the barracks]; robbed of our clothes, and blankets, and even of the boxes received on the same day, and the day before from our friends...Just think! Some mornings we get only three crackers; no meat; and even when a few delicacies are sent to us from home, they pilfer, and take them from us.

In July 1864, Rev. Handy recorded in his diary one of the Confederate officers had been murdered by a guard. The officer's name was Colonel Edward Pope Jones. He was lame from a disease which affected his feet, and was killed by a sentinel at the prison latrine, which Rev. Handy called a "water-house." The guard shot Pope from the roof of the outhouse building, apparently for not moving fast enough. Soon afterward, the other prisoners learned this soldier was not punished for the shooting, but instead, given a promotion in rank.

The prisoners' mail was routinely censored by prison authorities, and apparently no word got to the outside world of this crime. Captain Pinckney wrote that the prisoners' correspondence was so carefully guarded that

"no intimation of this occurrence was allowed to get out of the prison." For three months afterwards the murder, Jones' family members wrote letters to friends in the prison trying to find out any news about him.

In the preface to his book *United States Bonds; or Duress by Federal Authorities*, published in 1874, Rev. Handy stated he had not originally intended his diary for publication, but decided to publish it in order to "give permanency to what many do not wish to be lost." He considered his writings valuable, in other words, as a record of history, and, he emphasized, as "a faithful portraiture of prison life."

There has been no eye to effect; no purpose to be subserved in making matters worse than they were; everything has been stated with a scrupulous regard to truth; and nothing has been set down in prejudice or malice.

Extracts from his diary of 1863 and 1864 offer a glimpse into prison life at Fort Delaware by a perceptive, eloquent eyewitness.

The Prison Diary of Isaac W. K. Handy, 1863

Upon his arrival at Fort Delaware, Rev. Handy was asked by the commandant of the prison, General Albin F. Schoepf, "Can you say, Sir, upon oath, that you have never uttered language disloyal to the government?"

Handy answered truthfully that he could not do so, and as a consequence he was shown to his assigned quarters "in the second story of a large building nearly opposite the office of the commandant." Here the clergyman discovered that the majority of his fellow political prisoners were from Maryland and Virginia. That evening, at the request of some of these men, Rev. Handy conducted a prayer service. Afterward, he was given a blanket, and shared a "board bed" for the night with a fellow prisoner.

Though accustomed to much better accommodations, Rev. Handy

"slept much better" in his bunk than he expected to, and rose early the next morning and "took a wash in a brownish, filthy water, the only kind to be obtained." In one of his diary entries, he described his quarters:

Our room is occupied by seven persons ... The room is perhaps 12 by 18 feet, with an alcove, and grated window; the latter opening to the southwest, and looking directly across the water to Delaware City. At the other end, and communicating with a dark central apartment — the same in which we hold our worship — is a large opening, making a draft directly through the building. On each side of the room are tiers of bunks or berths

That morning, Handy saw the Confederate prisoners of war for the first time, and recorded what he observed from his "grated window" inside the fort:

I have a limited view of the river, and occasionally see vessels passing to and fro. The sight of Delaware City is obstructed by a cluster of willows surrounding an ice-house, which stands upon an embankment at a short distance from the Fort. A fine opportunity is, also, afforded, of noticing the movements of the Confederate prisoners — of whom there are said to be about 10,000 on the Island, at this time. These poor fellows are seen stirring about, in every direction, engaged in all sorts of work for their enemies. Many are carrying boards; some are rolling barrels of flour; others driving wheelbarrows before them; and scores, with ropes attached to horse-carts, are drawing water, beef, bread, shingles, and whatever else is necessary for the sustenance of the crowds congregated here, or for furthering the improvement at the Fort. I am told, that the men thus employed get but two meals per day, according to the established system of rations, but are allowed a third meal in return for their labor. My heart yearns toward these patriots of the South, as I see them toiling for their foes, or marching up, like criminals, to receive their rations.

As a political prisoner, Handy was better fed than the prisoners of

war at Fort Delaware, but his regular meals at this time were by no means sumptuous, consisting of corned beef, baker's bread, and "muddy coffee." Handy and two fellow prisoners also managed to procure tea, butter, and catfish on his first full day of incarceration, which was Wednesday, July 22, 1863.

The next day, Handy noted the quality of the water had been improved, and then went on to describe some civilians who paid a visit to Fort Delaware:

They were chiefly females, who have relatives and friends among the military. They seemed to enjoy themselves much, in promenading the ramparts, perambulating the enclosures, and in gazing upon our poor ragged Confederates, as they marched in crowds to the cisterns to fill their canteens. They were also much amused at the political prisoners, who stood before their grated windows, like so many wild beasts at a menagerie eyeing the spectators.

The clergyman also received a copy of a newspaper containing the article full of false accusations against him:

I received a number of the Delaware Republican, containing the anonymous article which, I suppose, was the instrumentality to effect my arrest. It is an illiterate and spiteful production — written chiefly to gratify personal vanity, and to pander to a rich demagogue who is willing to pay his flatterers. It contains several gross falsehoods, and calls the attention of the Provost-Marshal to the fact of my presence in Delaware, and of my extreme disloyalty. It says that I had been a chaplain in the Confederate Army; that I left Portsmouth (Virginia) because I could not support my family; that I had taken the oath of allegiance to get to Delaware; that all my political votes, before leaving this state, were given on a Southern basis; and that I had preached at Port Penn, by invitation of the pastor, to whom my true sentiments were wholly unknown. All of these items are untrue, in every particular

On July 25, Handy observed a group of Union soldiers who were prisoners at Fort Delaware:

Immediately in front of our quarters, and in the Fort-yard, a number of Yankee convicts are imprisoned. Some of them are carrying the ball and chain ... Those who wear the balls were originally condemned to death, but have had a commutation of their sentence in this degrading punishment. This morning, the whole posse of convicts were drawn up in front of their quarters and — with a heavy guard around them — subjected to a thorough search; and all their money of a certain kind (which we were unable to discover) was taken from them.

It was a curious spectacle, to see the rough and ill-bred detectives running their hands into the pockets of their old comrades; turning up the folds of their pants; feeling about their bodies, and sometimes lifting the lighter men entirely from their feet. Of the cause of the search I am ignorant

Rev. Handy's nights were often troubled by mosquitoes, bed bugs, and noisy and sick fellow prisoners. A continual nuisance for him and many of the other prisoners was the scourge of "bugs," or body lice. Everyone, he noted, made a "daily examination" of his clothes and body for the creatures.

I am quite amused sometimes at old Capt. J, who every day takes off his shirt, and seating himself at the window, spends an hour or two in the eager hunt for the "game." He says he has become so expert at the business, that he can discover the smallest nit without his glasses. This care on the part of the veteran prisoner is not to be wondered at, when it is known how much he suffered from these detestable parasites at Fort McHenry, where he had been confined for weeks under the most shameful circumstances.

On the last day of July, Handy was dismayed by a conversation with an old acquaintance, a "brother minister" from Philadelphia. This was Rev. Dr. Thomas Brainerd, a Presbyterian clergyman who was visiting Fort

Delaware. Known for his adamant devotion to the Union and the United States government, Brainerd held the opinion that anyone who "ridicules and abuses the government of his country" was a traitor, and "should be dealt with as a traitor."

At the first sight of my old acquaintance, I extended my hand, and expressed pleasure in seeing him. He returned this cordiality in a manner exceedingly cold and distant; and in a tone of solemn reproof, he remarked: "I am sorry to see you in this place, under such circumstances."

"I am here," said I, "for conscience' sake — just as old John Bunyan was once a prisoner in Bedford jail."

This remark produced a sort of momentary frenzy; and as he crossed the passage he trembled from head to foot.

"You are here," said he, "for treason! You are a criminal and a bad man!"

Dr. Brainerd went on to "chide" and "condemn" Handy at length, and refused to listen to any of his objections or arguments in his own defense. Finally, Rev. Handy could bear no more.

"Dr. Brainerd," I inquired, "what do you mean by this manner? Do you suppose I am a prisoner at this place from some foolish freak; that I am ignorant of the questions at issue; or that I prefer to suffer from some prejudice or bravado? You seem to think that all the wisdom is at the North, and that Southern people are all 'know-nothings' indeed."

This response served only to excite him the more; and he ran on in a wild and ranting way — condemning the reading of the South as one-sided and full of prejudice, and urging that all the troubles of the country had been brought on by Southern preachers

Handy assured him "Northern newspapers were everywhere current at the South, and that Republican opinions, as expressed in the *Herald*, *Tribune*, and other leading journals in that section, were common in every village and hamlet of the Confederacy." He went on:

On the other hand, I inquired: "Who reads a Southern newspaper at the North? Did you, Sir, ever see a Richmond, Charleston or New Orleans newspaper anywhere in Yankeedom, out of a reading-room or some editorial sanctum?"

I insisted that "political sermons were the rare exceptions in Southern pulpits ... How different ... with your ministers at the North, who are constantly harping upon abolition, and the higher law! And what is even more preposterous, many of you preachers act as though they had the divine ipse dixit of the Almighty ... saying, "I, the Lord God Almighty, have ordained the Government of the United States, as the only true and righteous government on earth; and whoso rebels against it, is not only a traitor to that government, but opposes my righteous will, and is subject, as an inevitable consequence, to my wrath and curse."

"That is just what I believe," replied the Doctor.

"Then, my brother," I rejoined, "you are a fanatic, and greatly deluded"

For more than an hour, the two clergymen engaged in a bitter dispute. Dr. Brainerd blamed the war on the South, while Rev. Handy argued that the incident which supposedly caused the war, the firing on Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, had been a necessary act of self-defense on the part of the Confederate government which had, for nearly four months preceding the bombardment, made repeated attempts to settle the problem peacefully.

In the course of the conversation, he charged upon the South the responsibility of all the bloodshed in this "unholy war," and urged that the firing upon and seizure of the United States forts was a criminal and terrible offense. I reasoned the matter briefly, and illustrated the conduct of the South, by that of the man who sees the hand of the assassin raised to strike him, and satisfied of his murderous intent, himself strikes the first blow to save his own life. This, I suggested, was the state of things when the Southern Commissioners were sent to Washington to negotiate for an amicable settlement of the

difficulty. They were put off, from time to time, with the promise of a hearing; every effort being made in the meantime, on the part of the Lincoln Administration, to secure an advantage by sending arms, ammunition, and reinforcements for the capture of Sumpter [sic], and for the overthrow of the Confederacy.

Surprisingly, after this lengthy and sharp exchange, the two clergymen eventually parted with a promise to pray for each other.

On Monday, August 3, Handy recorded the effects of the summer weather:

This day has been intensely hot — not a breath of air; the river as smooth as glass, and not a leaf stirring ... Much of this sort of weather would completely use us up. I have suffered considerably, not only from heat, but from my usual Monday headache.

The next day, Rev. Handy wrote:

The heat and mosquitoes were equally intolerable last night ... A number of prisoners came into the Fort-yard this morning, to get water, and to remove some bedding. Several of them crowding into a recess, out of sight of the sentinels, we soon found that the poor fellows were suffering for food, and two or three of our party threw them something to eat. The supply of bread, in all the rooms, seemed tolerably full, and we succeeded in getting a dozen or more loaves, which were thrown out to the sufferers in halves and quarters. It distressed me, to see the eagerness with which they threw up their hands, to catch at every piece ... What a shame to humanity, that these poor men should be subjected to such systematic cruelty, as is said to be practiced here! The political prisoners, so far, have "bread enough and to spare," and would gladly divide their surplus with the prisoners of war, but it is contrary to orders; the object being, I suppose, to starve the Confederates into taking the oath. I endeavored to encourage them, and every time I threw a piece of bread, exclaimed, "Stand fast, boys! Don't take the oath!" Some of them answered emphatically, "No! No!"

A few days later, Handy complained of the water supply. "The effluvium from the moat is beginning to be very offensive, and the water is becoming of a sickly green color. We have now no water in the cistern on the top of the Fort, and what is brought to us in buckets, from tanks in the yard, is warm and flat to the taste." Within days, several of the political prisoners, including Rev. Handy, were sick with chronic "diarrhoera, or dysentery." Later on, however, the clergyman reported that the quality of the water provided to the prisoners inside the fort had improved.

Handy and other political prisoners were allowed some freedom to take walks in the prison yard. On Wednesday, August 26, he learned about the conditions for the prisoners of war at Fort Delaware from several doctors imprisoned there:

During my rambles this morning, fell in with several Confederate physicians — twenty-four of whom are now on the island, most of them belonging to the army of Gen. Morgan. Had some conversation with them in regard to the condition of the hospitals, and the health of the island. An article has recently appeared in the Philadelphia papers, signed by four of Morgan's physicians, announcing the excellent sanitary arrangements at this Fort, and netting the average of deaths at only three a day. Great credit is given to Gen. Schoepf, for general management, and to the physicians in charge, for skill and attention. Dr. Marshall (Medical Director, and Chief, of the Physicians in Morgan's corps) informs me that this newspaper statement is wholly without foundation, in fact; and that the men who signed it, did so to secure personal comfort to themselves whilst in confinement. He says that Dr. G, whose name is at the head of the signatures, is not what he represents himself to be; and that neither he, nor his associates, have visited the hospitals; nor are they able to give any statistics derived from personal observation; but that having become pets with the authorities at the Fort, they have a fine time at their own table, which is well supplied with vegeta-

bles, and other things sent by the Commandant.

Dr. Marshall says the true state of the case is, that there is a great deal of sickness, great scarcity of medicines, very little attention to the patients, and that the daily number of deaths far exceeds the statement in the paper. He says that twenty-four men were sent away for burial, day before yesterday, and eighteen on yesterday; and that the carpenter informs him, that he had made 1,000 coffins during the last two months. He also states that there are five cases of smallpox on the island; and that the poor fellows are lying in tents, without mattresses, and in a miserable condition. Dr. Marshall and the other Confederate physicians are rendering all the aid they can in the way of prescriptions; but he says that all these are unheeded; and that the sick men often lie until the daily return of the Doctors, without a single dose of medicine.

Dr. Marshall's testimony is corroborated by what I hear from other sources. Mr. Belt — an excellent Christian man who belongs to our room, but who has been sick at Hospital No. 3, and is now remaining there as a nurse — says that it is almost impossible to get medicines for the sick; and that they have been dropping off, every day, in great numbers. Capt. Jackson was lying in our room for days, without the notice of a physician, though repeatedly sent for; and even after he was prescribed for at the hospital, he was obliged to wait a whole day, before the medicine was furnished by the steward. A poor boy from North Carolina, who was wounded at the battle of Gettysburg, was retained at the barracks for two weeks, in a condition of great filth, before he was taken to the hospital; and before he was taken there he was first robbed of his blankets, then of his oil cloth; and with his wounds undressed, and offensive beyond endurance, he was left to die. Somehow or other, he at last secured some notice, and was sent to No. 3. I saw the poor sufferer myself, and such an object I scarce ever looked upon before. Emaciated; he head shaved to free him from vermin; a dreadful hole entirely through his right shoulder, and the left fearfully swollen; he

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was sitting on the side of his iron bedstead, the very picture of a grateful recovery from desertion and neglect. Mr. Belt has been attending to him; and he is now doing tolerably well. A broad smile rested upon his thin face; he complained of no present suffering; and seemed to be happy in his improved circumstances. His mind had taken hold of the subject of religion, and he expressed gratitude to God for his spared life.

The next day, Handy wrote about an interesting conversation he had with one of the prison guards (a member of a Union Army unit called the Purnell Legion), and about seeing some new prison barracks under construction:

Contracted a headache, from walking in the sun; and was obliged to seek my berth. Felt somewhat better in the afternoon, and took a walk up to the old barracks in the western part of the island. Felt some hesitation in passing the guards, as the idea prevails that the political prisoners are not allowed to walk in that direction, nor to have communication with the prisoners of war...In crossing one of the bridges, found a young Englishman belonging to the Purnell Legion. Had about fifteen minutes'

conversation with him. He said he had been in this country only six months; that he joined the Legion for want of employment; that he found himself on the wrong side; that the people of England and France both sympathized with the South; and that he intended to cross the lines just as soon as he could; but that he had to be very quiet. I gave him some words of encouragement, and as I bade him good-bye, he expressed the hope that we might meet again.

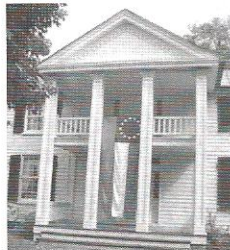
Passed by several sentinels, through a stable-yard, down the whole length of the new barracks, and by a dirty looking hospital; and presently, found myself in the midst of hundreds of "poor rebs" who were crowded together, apparently in the most disagreeable confusion. The whole area between the river and the old barracks was filled with squads sitting here and there, or standing in close proximity at various points. The bank of the canal was literally swarming with men engaged in washing; and everything had the appearance of dirt and disease ...

The new barracks, immediately in front of the fort, and just opposite our window, are now nearly completed. The building, which is between 500 and 600 feet long has been put up en-

Continued on page 56

Sam Davis, a Hero Remembered!

The 150th Anniversary commemoration
of the capture, trial and execution of
Sam Davis, Boy Hero of the Confederacy.
November 22, 23 & 24, 2013



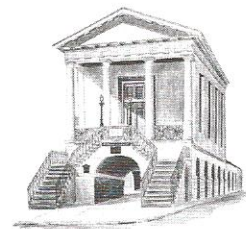
This event will be held at the Sam Davis home in Smyrna, Tenn. and is sponsored by Murfreesboro SCV Camp No. 33.

- Friday November 22: Bus tour of Coleman Scouts sites and memorial at the Sam Davis monument in Nashville, Tenn. Sam Davis seminar and banquet at the Sam Davis home.
- Saturday November 23: Music, living histories & play about the story of Sam Davis. Sam Davis memorial ball.
- Sunday November 24: Morning prayer service. Memorial service at the grave of Sam Davis.

Visit the website: samdavis150.com for schedule, early registration form and other details. For more information, email: mboroscv33@aol.com or call James at 615-890-6194.

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CHARLESTON SOUTH CAROLINA

The Prison Diary of Isaac Handy

tirely by our Southern soldiers, who have been promised 40 cts. a day for their labor ... Hundreds have only received an extra meal, and possibly, a plug of tobacco. The work has really been a benefit to them, but it has been to me a sore thing, during my confinement, to notice how these men have labored, and to think of the thousands of dollars saved by such means to the U.S. Government. Hundreds have refused to lay hold — having means enough to buy what little necessities they may require for health and comfort; but others are forced to help their enemies in order to get enough to eat. The regular rations consist of one cracker and a cup of poor coffee in the morning, and a small piece of meat with a cup of soup at dinner. Sick or well, this is the allowance, both in quantity and kind...and very many eat it only because they are obliged to do so, or starve ...

On the first day of September, Rev. Handy recorded some somber personal meditations on prison life:

Prison life is becoming very irksome, and I begin to realize its debasing influence upon the mind, as well as its ill effects upon the body. Continuous thought is almost impossible, except in regard to one's own trials, and the dreadful state of the country. I find it almost impossible to read the Bible with composure. Everything around is of a distracting nature; we are in the midst of noise and confusion from morning until night; and even after we have gotten to bed, there are always a few noisy fellows who are swearing, disputing, or frolicking until almost midnight, and some until morning hours. It is the unanimous opinion that a great change has taken place in regard to these matters since I came to the prison; but it is bad enough yet; and my heart sinks within me when I notice the prevalence of sin around me.

Two days later, the clergyman was cheered by a gift of food sent to him by his wife, but dismayed to hear that other prisoners were not so fortunate:

Having received from my wife a basket of corn, potatoes, tomatoes, and a fine piece of lamb and other good things, I concluded to give an entertainment, and accordingly invited some six or seven persons to dine with me ... My object was to give some of my neighbors who have had very little opportunity for comforts, at least one good dinner ... It really did me good to see how my companions enjoyed the meal. Alexander, who was one of the party, gave us an account of the destitution at the barracks. He says the men are hungry from morning until night, and are actually starving by slow degrees; that the one cracker and morsel of meat which they get twice a day, with a little coffee and soup, are not enough for the sustenance of hearty men; and that the cooking is so hard, that the delicate ones can scarcely swallow the food at all. The coffee and soup have generally been made — until recently — from the water in a ditch, which has served as a receptacle for all manner of filth — even to the washings of the vessels used by the sick.

On September 9, Handy was encouraged by the effects his religious services were having on his fellow prisoners, noting that several of the "hard swearers" and gamblers had resolved to give up bad language and cards. On September 11, he observed the coffins of dead prisoners being readied for transport:

Counted twelve coffins on the wharf, each enclosing a dead body to be taken to Jersey for burial. Three or four persons are generally put into one grave, and although cards are tacked upon each coffin, designating the individual, sometimes

they are rubbed off; and I am told that they are very careless about trying to discover the names of the deceased.

During the same month, Handy continued to record deaths in the prison:

Tuesday, 15th. Visited the wharf to get the report of yesterday's deaths among the prisoners of war. Found eighteen coffins ready to be sent to the Jersey shore ... Had an interview with one of the hospital stewards, who was on his way to the office with his daily report and found that the true number of deaths yesterday was fifteen — three of the coffins at the wharf containing the bodies of men who had died the day before. Two deaths were from small-pox ...

Sabbath, 20th. Twenty-six bodies of Confederate prisoners were carried over to Jersey this morning — one of them being that of a man who had attempted to escape by swimming the river. He was washed ashore with several canteens attached to his person. His eyes were eaten out, indicating that he had been drowned several days.

Monday, 21st. The number of deaths reported this morning for the day previous was twenty. Three of these perished at the barracks from sheer debility and cold, on their way from their bunks to "the rear." The mortality is fearful, and not likely to decrease unless some better arrangements are made for food, medicines, and attention. Very little difference is made between sick and well men in the articles of diet, even at the hospitals, and none at all at the barracks. Boiled fresh beef and a watery soup keep them with a constant diarrhea. There are five or six hundred men in the hospitals — and room for no more ... there is a strange scarcity of medicines, and prescriptions are not honored ...

In October, the clergyman report-

ed on some of the garrison personnel:

A court martial has been sitting today for the trial of Capt. M of the Purnell Legion, who has been playing the rake on a large scale — not only among the few females on the island, but with strangers who visit sick relatives at the barracks. If reports be true, he must be a grand rascal indeed, offering insults even to female children, and in one instance to a deaf mute. Two ladies from Kentucky were decoyed into his room under the pretense of showing them around; and whilst one of them walked out with a brother officer, he locked the door, and pushing the stranger on the bed, offered her the grossest insults, and would have no doubt violated her person had she not successfully resisted and procured timely help ...

The beer drinking continues, and fights among the Yankee soldiers are the order of the day. Not much damage is done, however, as the participants are generally taken to the guard-house and allowed time to sober off, to take a fresh spree on the morrow.

Fort Delaware was also a place of confinement for Union soldiers who had been sentenced by army courts-martial to do hard time there. In his diary, Rev. Handy noted the presence of these "Yankee convicts," some of them restrained by "the ball and chain," and in an entry for October 25, 1863, the clergyman described the punishment of two insubordinate Union soldiers by thumb hanging.

We had another spectacle of torment this forenoon, in the case of two poor Irishmen, members of Co. Q, who were hung up by their thumbs and wrists in front of their own quarters, and in the presence of all their comrades. They were tied by a rope to a cross-beam which was thrown over the parapet, and then drawn up until they could only just stand upon the ends of their toes. They appeared to suffer very much, and one of them looked every moment as though he would faint from pain and exhaustion. The hands of each were purple and distended with blood. The weaker of the two, finding it impossible to retain his water, was ago-

nized with this additional mortification. This scene of barbarism was under the immediate direction of Capt. Ahl and Provost-Marshall Hawkins; the latter a very pompous and arrogant little fellow, whose disgusting and unfeeling conduct towards prisoners is a subject of constant remark.

The occasion of the present infliction was the independence of one of the Irishmen in returning a blow given by the Provost-Marshall — an act which was considered by the Irishman as unmilitary and unjust ...

As George H. Moffett noted in his memoir, this harsh form of discipline was also used on Confederate enlisted men at Fort Delaware. In the last week of October, Rev. Handy received some reading material which proved unwelcome:

Mr. Paddock, the Federal Chaplain, called and left some papers for distribution. I am very glad to get these weeklies; but never read them without having my feelings hurt — notwithstanding many good things they contain. It is especially painful to find religious journals opposing compromise, and rejoicing with malignant spite, in the purpose of subjugation or extermination. A correspondent of the Independent of October 15th says: "We are to bring this civil war to a close, not by compromise. Compromise, thank God, is impossible. It is to come by subjugation or extermination of the rebels, and in no other way." Are they who thus teach disciples of the Prince of Peace? Are they not demons, belching forth the very spirit of the pit? Alas, for the age in which we live! The church is demoralized — the Christian name is too frequently a deceit — Christ's members (?) are mad men! All this is literally true to a very great extent at the North.

In describing the treatment of the prisoners at Fort Delaware, Handy wrote the following in an entry of November 6, 1863:

It has not been uncommon here for our half-clothed, half-fed Confederates at the barracks, to be ordered about in the

coarsest and roughest manner ... and to be knocked on the head with a stick; or to be stuck with bayonets, for the slightest offences; and sometimes, (for no crime whatever) men have been shot at, or cruelly murdered by the sentinels ... Sick men have been kept at the barracks until perfectly emaciated from diarrhea, without the necessary sick vessels; and have been obliged to stagger, through the quarters, to the outhouse on the bank of the river, with filth streaming upon their legs; and then unable to help themselves, they have fallen upon the pathway, and have been found dead in the morning — victims of cruel neglect. Barefooted, bareheaded, and ragged men, tottering with disease, have been left to suffer long for the necessary clothing, or medicines, which might have been abundantly supplied; men, scarcely convalescent, have been made to walk from one end of the island to the other, in changing hospitals, thus bringing on a relapse in almost every case, and have died a few days thereafter. Physicians, in contract service, have gone daily into the hospitals, saturated with liquor; and without looking at the tongue, or feeling the pulse, have tantalized the poor sufferers with the prescription, "Oh, you must eat! You must eat!" and without either furnishing them medicine or meat, have left them to die. Sick men on entering the hospitals, have been denuded of their clothing; and when getting a little better, have been forced to walk over the damp floors in their stocking-feet and drawers to the water-closet, at a remote end of the building — thus exposing themselves to cold and the danger of relapse. Men have been dismissed from the hospitals to go to Point Lookout, without hat, shoes or blanket; hundreds have been exposed to the danger of contracting the small-pox from coffins filled with loathsome bodies, left for hours together on the wharf, whilst prisoners have been embarking for exchange; the dispensary has remained, not only for days, but for weeks together, without some of the most important and common medicines; prisoners have been "bucked and gagged" for the most trivial offenses; and the very dead have been robbed of their last shirts, placed in rough coffins, perfectly naked, and then hurried into shallow, unmarked graves.

On November 18, Handy and other political prisoners were moved to new quarters:

We are now in a room about sixty feet long by thirty wide; in which are arranged three rows of bunks — one three tiers high, running through the whole length of the room, down the middle; and the other two being built against the walls on either side, with one tier less than the middle row. At the east end of the building are three good-sized windows ... At the other end of the house are four narrower openings ... which once were furnished with sash and glass, but are now wholly without either. They are temporarily closed with rough boards, through the crevices of which is constantly emitted a strong current of air — to which is opposed no counteracting influence save the heat from an old coal stove, entirely inadequate for the comfort of the room.

When the month ended, the windows were as yet unrepaired.

As the year of 1863 drew to a close, Handy wrote out six of his reasons for not taking the oath of allegiance to the United States. These were the first two he recorded:

1st. Because I am not a citizen of the United States; and have no desire or expectation of being such, under the present tyrannical and unconstitutional administration of the Government. My allegiance is due, first of all, to the Commonwealth of Virginia — where I have my home, where all my interests, and all prospects for future usefulness, so far as the present can decide ...

2nd. The State of Virginia is one of the Confederate States of the South — a Confederacy really and truly established by a necessary revolution, but still struggling with a rich and powerful foe, which seeks to subjugate its entire population; and if needs be, to exterminate the whole Southern race, to build up Northern cities, and to fill the pockets of Northern men. While this is done, under the plea of philanthropy and emancipation of a servile people, thousands by invasion and warfare are swept from the face of the earth, and rendered abundantly more wretched

and degraded by the woes thus brought upon them. In swearing allegiance to the United States government, I approve all this wickedness

Handy's Diary of 1864

Rev. Handy was ill much of January 1864, and made few entries in his diary that month. The first day of February, he complained, was an "exceedingly disagreeable and rainy day. The island is literally a bank of mud."

Expressing his personal depression and discouragement brought on by sickness he wrote of "the cruelty of my imprisonment," his worries about his family at home, and the behavior of his companions, some of whom were "infidels" who scorned religion. The clergyman was also concerned his own discouragement was setting a bad example for the believers and unbelievers around him.

My depressed and moody condition, for some days past, has had a bad influence, I fear, upon the interests of religion in the room. Far be it from me to suggest to any mind, by such example, that religion is a gloomy thing. But I am sick, and anxious about my helpless and dependent family. The future is dark. I live in the midst of noise and confusion, and I seem, verily, to be in a sort of hell upon earth. My Heavenly Father is leading me by a way I know not. Thy will, O God, be done!

On February 4, he recorded that the windows in the quarters he occupied had "at last, been fitted with sash and glass." On that same day, two new political prisoners became occupants of the place. They were, wrote Handy, newspaper editors, "Messrs. Richardson and Joyce, late editors of the *Baltimore Republican* who were under sentence of banishment."

Four days later, Rev. Handy "had the pleasure of another visit from my wife," and the following morning, he and his fellow prisoners were ordered to move back into their old quarters, which Handy found more comfortable.

The prisoners were allowed to receive supplies of food from friends on the outside. After a week in his new quarters Handy wrote:

We are now living very comfortably in No. 6. Everything really necessary is at hand; plenty of tea, coffee, sweetmeats, good beef, poultry, milk, and other luxuries. Every few days brings us a box or basket, and we generally have enough, and to spare. Brogden received today a small box from Baltimore; I, too, had a small package from Philadelphia. Uncle Sam has had little to do with feeding any members of our mess, and others of the political prisoners have been quite as independent, especially the inmates of Nos. 1 and 2...

As I am about to retire, the wind howls furiously around the fort; and I think with pity of the poor fellows at the barracks, who will probably suffer from cold.

During the bitterly cold month of February, Handy continued to worry about the Confederate prisoners of war:

For several days past, the weather has been intensely cold — colder, it is thought, than it has been before in this region for at least four years. The river is again frozen over, and all the moats and ponds on the island are blocked up with ice. The poor fellows at the barracks have had a hard time. I can get no particulars, but we hear that several have lately been badly frozen. Whether any have died from the effects of the cold, I have not heard. Seven men escaped night before last, but were all caught near Wilmington, and brought back.

On Saturday, February 20, Handy learned one prisoner in the barracks had "perished from the cold."

Despite "a thick coating of snow" on the ground on the first day of March, the weather began to grow milder. The mortality rate among the prisoners of war had dropped, and Handy's spirits seemed to improve. The approach of spring, however, brought the return of insect torments, as he noted on Saturday, March 5:

We are beginning to be troubled with the bed-bugs. Whenever it gets a little warmer than usual, they are almost as numerous and active as in summertime. Last night they came out upon us with a furious attack. Bringing a light, the board immediately over my head was found to be literally covered with the filthy vermin. They fell down upon us so thickly, that Tibbetts moved his bed to the floor. I tried to stand them, but had a hard time of it.

The following Saturday, Handy reported news of a fellow clergyman of Virginia:

The papers announce the imprisonment of the Rev. Dr. Armstrong of Norfolk. He is to be shut up at Fort Hatteras, for alleged Southern sympathies. Some time ago he took the oath of allegiance to the United States Government, and encouraged others to do the same, on the principle of submission to a conquering foe ... I have no doubt that this good brother has faithfully adhered to all that he considered implied in his obligation. But this does not seem to be enough. A man must think and feel with the [Lincoln] Administration, right or wrong. He must have no opposition of heart, however wicked it may seem to him to be. He has no right to any views but those prescribed by the Administration, however corrupt. And in carrying out this purpose, an inquisition must be instituted, to look into the secret soul of every man, or at least every prominent man in the community ... The Commission who are to make this investigation, are to decide not by what a man does, or even by what he says, but by virtue of their own perception in the case; and if in their opinion the poor man is "unsound," he must be thrown into prison, or put to work in the streets. The inquisition has commenced its work. What next? Dr. Armstrong has been kindly supplying my pulpit during my long absence from the people of my charge. Now that he is removed, I presume Gen. Butler, or Gen. Wild will install some divine more congenial to the "free North."

On April Fools' Day, Rev. Handy described various jokes and pranks the prisoners played on each other.

Two days later, the commandant at Fort Delaware gave him permission to preach to some of the prisoners of war in the barracks outside the fort. Accompanied by some of the high-ranking Confederate prisoners, including General R. B. Vance, Handy went to the division building which was occupied by "officers of Morgan's command." These were men who served under General John Hunt Morgan, the famous "Rebel Raider." They had been sent to Fort Delaware after being held at the Ohio Penitentiary where, according to the testimony of some of General Morgan's officers, their treatment had been "brutal and ignominious in the extreme."

In a very short time the apartment was entirely filled — benches, bunks, and every available standing place — with intelligent and noble looking young men. I was introduced to the assembly by the Rev. Mr. Samford, a "Rebel" captain, who being a Methodist minister, is officiating as chaplain to Morgan's Brigade. I had not had such an audience since I have been on the island; and for intelligence and fine appearance ... not for many a day past. I preached about three quarters of an hour, on the desperate wickedness of the heart. The attention was profound to the last moment. Not a single man left during the sermon, nor did the slightest interruption occur. It was a decidedly pleasant time; and I thank God for the opportunity of proclaiming the truths of His Word to a congregation so unusually interesting. ...

The quarters occupied by these officers, with the buildings and fence, constitute a sort of pen, with an area of about two acres. The long side of the building and the parallel fence are each about 300 feet, running east and west ... The campus is low and flat, and at this time quite muddy from recent rains. Intersecting walks, constructed of planks, are arranged at proper distances, and add greatly to the comfort of those who would seek exercise in bad weather. The quarters seem to be ample for the present number of prisoners, the bunks wide and comfortable, and the "divisions" well heated. One large stove appears to be sufficient for the shelter occupied by the Morgan men.

On April 12, the third anniversary of the day the siege of Fort Sumter began, Handy penned the following reflections in his diary:

On this day, three years ago, the first guns were fired in this miserable war. On that day Sumpter [sic] fell. It was a sad necessity that induced that terrible, but noble effort in defence of right against usurpation, in our family of States, and in opposition to a self-seeking and fanatical combination, that would have crushed out the very life of the South to build up a sectional interest in a distant corner of the Republic. How dreadful has been the result! How many thousand hearts have been made to bleed; how many thousands of immortal souls have gone prematurely to their final account! What vast expenditures of treasure! What alienations; what spite; what horrible vindictiveness has been engendered; and alas, how long is this state of things to continue? Separation — positive, permanent separation — is peace; and, if there is to be any prosperity in the future, it can only be found in the independent existence of the two portions of the country. A nominal union, continued from year to year at the point of the bayonet, would be a perpetual curse.

In the same entry, he deplored the death of a Confederate prisoner:

One of the young men (S. B. Davis) recently shot by a sentinel, died last night at the hospital. The matter has been investigated by the authorities, who blame but do not criminate the act. Is it not too bad, that our poor suffering fellow prisoners should thus be shot down, without redress?

On April 23, Handy recorded that a photographer visiting Fort Delaware was busy all day "photographing the faces of Confederate officers, and a few of the political prisoners." In the same entry, he described some prisoners of war who came inside the grounds of the fort, near the quarters of the political prisoners.

A number of poor Confederates from the barracks came within the fort this af-



COOKING ON THE BANKS.

ternoon, with a cart to haul out some rubbish. By some means it was ascertained that they wanted bread. Every loaf or slice that could be spared from our rooms was gathered up and thrown out to them from the windows. It was painful to see them eagerly rushing with uplifted hands, to catch the smallest stale scrap. Some of them began to devour with eagerness, whatever they were fortunate enough to secure; and others filled their pockets and coat-bosoms with the precious food. What does all this mean? Are these men starving? They are hungry, very hungry — else they would never degrade themselves by rushing for stale bread — scrambling for it if it should fall into the dust, and then eating it with evident relish.

In May, Rev. Handy was pleased and encouraged by the responses to his preaching and prayer services, which were well-attended. A number of prisoners made professions of faith, and others evinced a serious interest in religion. On May 10, Handy was dismayed when he found one of the men who had promised to mend his ways "in a state of intoxication," but

the clergyman recorded that the spiritual "awakening" among the prisoners was nevertheless "continuing."

Further into this entry, Handy described how the imprisoned private soldiers communicated the officers:

The two pens, occupied severally by officers and privates, are separated by fences, which stand about fifteen or twenty feet apart. These fences are guarded by sentinels who perambulate an elevated platform, from which they may overlook the two enclosures. It requires considerable dexterity to elude the watchfulness of the rough "blue coats" who are there night and day. The cunning "Rebs" have found an expedient in every pebble of suitable weight to secure the necessary impetus for communication across the parapet. Notes are constantly falling into the area on the officers' side, complaining of hard usage by the Yankee authorities, and asking for help or redress from Confederate leaders. Today, one of the little carrier pigeons brought the following to Gen. Vance:

Soldiers' Quarters, Fort Delaware, April 28th, 1864

To Gen. Robert H. Vance, or any other Rebel officer:

Prompted by the gnawing of hunger, I am emboldened to make this appeal to you; hoping that being informed of our sufferings, you can and will appeal to the Commanding General in our behalf, and if possible have our rations increased.

For breakfast we get one-fifth of a loaf of bread, and from four to six ounces of meat — fresh or salt beef, or both — and a pint of very inferior coffee. For dinner we get the same amount of bread and meat — Sunday and Wednesday excepted — when, instead of meat, we get two or three potatoes, and a cup of bean or rice soup. As to supper, we have none.

Whether the rations allowed to us by the authorities and wasted by the cooks, I cannot say, as I do not know. But one thing is certain, we are suffering.

Respectfully, A Hungry Rebel

This note was handed to Gen. Vance, who, feeling it to be his duty to do so, presented it to Gen. Schoepf. The immediate reply was: "Say to them, for their consola-

tion — the rations are to be reduced." The authorities are "shutting down" upon the prisoners, in every part of the island. Officers and privates are, alike, subject to the rigors of this change. Rations are to be reduced.

A few days later, Handy complained:

To what extremes the Yankees go, in their bitterness toward the South! The "slaveocracy" as they are pleased to call all those who oppose their fanatical and rabid views, are "wicked, and only wicked, continually." The extermination of the [southern] race is not with them a mere matter of talk. They desire it, and strive for it. We sometimes have exhibitions of this insane idea among the understrappers on this island, which it is really difficult to bear. The sutler's establishment has a nest of these strange birds about it. One Emory, who is a principal clerk, gave Charleton Morgan a dose of venom this morning, nauseating in the extreme. Among other things — true to the characteristic infidelity of his class — he violently suggested, that should [General] Grant be unfortunate in Virginia, it would be proof positive that the Bible is not from God — or that God himself is not to be revered. Thus these men, originating a standard of their own, condemn or deny the Almighty, if He does not conform to what they propose as the measure of wisdom and righteousness. I have myself, before coming to this place, heard one of their preachers urging the impropriety of furnishing medicines to sick Rebels; and another violently advocating the utter expulsion from Southern soil, of all who would not adopt their rule of right.

The papers announce a great change in the sentiment at Portsmouth and Norfolk; and speak, in congratulatory terms, of the prevailing loyalty of the people of those oppressed and ruined cities. Why will men delight themselves in open falsehood! Who is to be deceived by such continued misstatements? The Southern sentiment in the two cities is as rife as it ever was among the comparatively few who really belong there. Large numbers of old citizens have been driven away, and are now waiting, in suffering, as scattered

refugees throughout the Confederacy, hoping for the day of their return. Those who remain are obliged to be "mum" or submit to banishment, or hard labor upon the Yankee works. Freedom of speech, and even freedom of thought (as in the case of Dr. Armstrong), is entirely crushed out by the inhuman cruelties which the reign of terror has employed. Hundreds of adventurers, plunderers, and Mammon worshippers have crowded into those places, seizing upon property, and "rooting out" all who join not with them in their deeds of injustice and rapine. Have I not cause to be thankful this day, that I am a prisoner at Fort Delaware! How could my heart endure the greater sufferings of a mock-freedom, even among my own people, and within my own doors!

The next day, Handy and a few other political prisoners were told they would be moved to new quarters. Like many of the Confederate officers, they would be residing in one of the barracks outside the fort. On Monday, May 16, he took his first meal "at the common table, with my fellow prisoners."

A quarter of a loaf of bread, a very small piece of boiled beef, and a tin cup two thirds full of rice soup constituted the ration. Major Bullock treated me to a slice of ham (all the way from Kentucky) which I readily substituted for my coarse and unpalatable beef. The soup was the first of the kind I had ever tasted, and was much better than I expected. Those who are in the habit of receiving boxes have formed themselves into messes, and bring their extras to the table with them. The sutler's store is hard by, at which those who are able buy cheese, butter, eggs, &c paying of course, the most exorbitant prices.

In returning today from "the rear" I stopped for a few moments to look out upon the water — intending nothing more than a glance, and ignorant of any order to the contrary. The rough and impudent sentinel immediately called to me from his elevated stand on top of the water-house, and insolently ordered me to pass on. Mistaking the command, I continued standing with my back to the fellow, until he repeated the order a sec-

ond and a third time, and threatened to fire. I could understand nothing of this abuse, and might have been shot, but for the intervention of friends who urged me forward. Had the man informed me of the requirement, or addressed me with any sort of soldierly decency, I should have obeyed at once. The truth is, we have a set of low poltroons on guard, whose pleasure it is to insult and browbeat the prisoners on the slightest provocation.

A day later, Handy and his companions were moved yet again, from division 27 to division 23, which he found larger, and in a "better locality." The new barracks had more shade, and were closer to the latrines. The clergyman was now in the tenth month of his imprisonment at Fort Delaware.

As summer approached, Handy registered a number of complaints about his poor health and the discomforts of his barracks. "Still suffering from cold," he wrote on the last day of May, "and general indisposition. Our division is exceedingly damp and open. We have water standing under the floor all the time..."

On June 17, he made this entry:

Considerable sickness in "the pen" — diarrhoea and sore throats. Rations growing worse; coarse bread; mean gruel; and bad meat. Irregular and unseasonable hours for meals. Obligated to take my rations from the table (where they are served to us without knife, fork, spoon, or plate), and by hashing the bread and meat together, and heating the mess over a few burning sticks, try to make it more palatable.

Handy wrote on the same subject later in the month:

Received a box from my wife containing clothing, books, and eatables ... Our rations are now a small piece of bread and meat each, and a cup of water at breakfast; and at about four o'clock P.M. the same quantity of meat and bread (the bread being a mixture of corn and flour) with the addition of a cup of rice soup. The soup is so bad — being often filled with flies

and dirt — that I never use it; and the meat is so very coarse, I can only dispose of it when driven to the necessity of doing so by long fasting and a sharp appetite ... Without an occasional box from my wife or some other friend, I fear my sufferings would be more than I could bear.

Toward the end of June, Handy recorded the prisoners "now have orders to use the ditch-water for washing."

The initiation was disagreeable beyond measure, as the water is very nearly stagnant, of a brownish green color, and filled with insects. It must necessarily become more and more disgusting, as it shall be used and re-used by the hundreds in "the pen."

Beginning on Thursday, July 7, Handy wrote of one of the Confederate officers, Col. Edward Pope Jones, who was murdered near the prison latrine:

... A lamentable affair occurred at "the rear" about dusk this evening. Many persons are now suffering from diarrhoea, and crowds are frequenting the neighborhood. The orders are to go by one path, and return by the other. Two lines of men, going and coming, are in continual movement. I was returning from the frequented spot, and in much weakness, making my way back when suddenly, I heard the sentinel challenge from the top of the water-house. I had no idea he was speaking to me, until my friends called my attention to the order. I suppose my pace was too slow for him. I passed on; and as frequent inquiries were made in regard to my health, I was obliged to say to my friends, "we have not time to talk; the sentinel is evidently restless or alarmed, and we are in danger."

I had scarcely reached my quarters, before a musket fired; and it was immediately reported that Col. E.P. Jones had been shot.

The murder of Col. Jones is the meanest, the most inexcusable affair that has occurred in the officers' quarters; or that has come under my own observation since my imprisonment at Fort Delaware. I did not see him fall; but have learned from

Capt. J.B. Cole, who was an eyewitness to the whole scene, that although he was standing within ten steps of the man who killed him, he heard no challenges, nor any order to move on. The first intimation he had of the sentinel's displeasure, was the discharge of a musket, and the simultaneous exclamation of the Colonel—"Oh, God! Oh, God! My God, what did you shoot me for? Why didn't you tell me to go on? I never heard you say anything to me!"—and with a few such exclamations, he sank upon the ground; and then fell, or rather rolled, down the embankment.

Col. Jones has been in the barracks so short a time, that I have not had the pleasure of making his acquaintance. I have only learned that he is an intelligent physician, of considerable property and influence, and that he is from Middlesex County, Va. Since he came to Fort Delaware, he has been suffering constantly with some affection of the feet, causing lameness.

At the time he was shot, he was hobbling along with one shoe, and was carefully stepping down a rough place near the water-house, buttoning his pants. He could not have been more than twenty steps from the point of the musket. It is said that the murderer seemed, all day, to be seeking an opportunity to shoot someone. It is also reported that Capt. Ahl was seen on the top of the shanty, giving some orders, only a few moments before the catastrophe

Friday, 8th. The boy who shot Col. Jones is again on guard this morning; and it is reported that he has been promoted to a corporality...General Schoepf visited "the pen" accompanied by Capt. Ahl, and other officers...I succeeded in halting the General, and spoke to him myself about the recklessness of the sentinels...He referred to the repeated attempts which had lately been made to effect escapes; spoke decidedly of his purpose to put a stop to the whole thing; and excused the guards. "They shall shoot down any man," said he, "who tries to get away."

Capt. Ahl averred that Col. Jones had been challenged; and justified the sentinel. Several bystanders insisted that he was quietly returning from "the rear" and that there was no cause for the murder. Ahl affirmed that he was nearby when the shooting took place; and that he had or-

dered the sentinel to fire at the first man that stopped on the thoroughfare...

Sunday, 10th...Col. Jones died last night in the hospital, but the Yankees are silent, and we hear very little about him...

Captain Henry C. Dickinson also noted the shooting of Col. Jones in his diary:

He [Jones] had gotten to some rude steps, some twenty feet to the sink, and was endeavoring to get down; whilst doing so he raised his hand to fix up his suspender, and was in a moment shot down. Lieutenant Brockenbrough, who was under and within four feet of the sentinel, said no warning had been given; others said he called out to him to "double quick" and fired immediately. Rev. Mr. Handy says that the sentinel called to him and that he was ahead of Colonel Jones ... At any rate, the fact was undeniable that Jones was orderly, quiet and unobtrusive; that there never had been any orders to us to double quick going to or coming from the sink; that Colonel Jones was very lame — hardly able to walk — and, therefore, could not "double quick," which fact was apparent to the sentinel. Yet he was fired upon, the ball passing through the arm and side. The poor man cried out in his agony, "My God, do not kill me," for lying there he could see the cold-blooded scoundrel reloading his piece.

During the first week of August, Handy reported hearing of another shooting. "A sentinel at the barracks shot one of the privates today," he wrote, "and ... great commotion ensued." The clergyman was also concerned about the prisoners who were receiving vaccinations from the prison doctors.

Many of the prisoners are suffering from mal-practice, in the insertion of a spurious virus, for vaccination. Gangrened arms are common, and many a poor fellow has been bereft of a valuable limb, professedly to avert the small-pox. A great government ought to have better surgeons. I am reminded of Heliogabalus, the facetious Roman, who used to cut off men's noses under pretence of shaving their beards.



MURDER OF COL. JONES.

We are again on short rations. No meat for several meals, and the supply of water nearly out.

On August 12, Handy heard of a fateful rumor concerning some of the Confederate prisoners of war:

Great excitement has prevailed all day in consequence of a rumor, that six hundred officers are to embark tomorrow, for Hilton Head, South Carolina. Gen. Schoepf came into "the pen" early this morning, attended by several assistants, and remained during the calling of the roll. This is the first time he has ever been present (since I have been in the barracks) on such an occasion. Before he went out, he informed two officers that they would be exchanged in a day or two, with many others ... What hope! What buoyancy! How anxious are the thousands here imprisoned, to get back once more to friends and home!

The next day, when the names of six hundred Confederate officers who were to be taken out of Fort Delaware would be made known, was one "of great excitement."

At an early hour the Sergeant came in, and announced that the names of such persons as were to be sent off would soon be called in the yard. All hands were up in a trice; and soon Gen. Schoepf, Capt. Ahl, and sundry clerks, with sergeants and guards, made their appearance. Orders were given to stand on the left of the long walk running through the middle of the open area. Calls were made first for field officers; and then for captains and lieutenants, running down the rolls in an irregular manner, into the M's, and taking a few scattering names farther on in the alphabet. Upon what principle the elections were made, it is impossible to tell. Many were glad; many were disappointed. One man said it made him think of the Day of Judgment. It was certainly very solemn, to see the crowds separating, some to the right, and others remaining on the left.

Days passed, but finally, on August 20, Handy wrote, "It was reported that 'the Six Hundred' would certainly leave today."

All were on the qui vive. Presently a sergeant announced, that at 12 o'clock the move would be made...The roll was

called, and every man took his place in the ranks, according to the number assigned him about a week ago ... After long delay — all being ready — the guards took their places, and the command was given to march through the sally-port to the west end of the "bull-pen." Before this, there had been numberless hand-shakings, and many sorrowful adieus. All were delighted with the prospect of "home again" but there was not a heart there that did not swell with emotion, in the prospect of immediate, and perhaps final separation, from friends and fellow-sufferers in that damp and murky "pen."

As the noble fellows marched out, I stood at the opening of the sally-port, as near as the guards would allow, and until the very last man disappeared from the enclosure, "Good-bye! Good-bye!" was uttered, time and again, as the files moved on, and I could do nothing but return farewells, as some one or more in every rank would wave the parting salutation.

Many good friends left today. A number of them were zealous Christians; several of them young converts; most of them respecters of religion; and a majority, I think, men of unusually good morals. I felt sad, and more than once were my eyes in danger of betraying the deep well-

ing within. Prayers went up to Heaven for the safety and happiness of the brave fellows, and we shall hope to hear soon of their arrival among friends at the South.

As it turned out, these six hundred Confederate officers were unknowingly embarking upon a journey into horrendous hardship and suffering. For the next seven months, they would undergo an ordeal which would make them famous in history as "The Immortal Six Hundred."

Though Rev. Handy clearly saw that he was doing much good for his fellow captives in Fort Delaware, he continued to experience periods of discouragement. Worn down in body and spirit, and sometimes fearing for his life, he longed for release from his imprisonment. On Tuesday, September 6, he observed some of the effects of prison life among other prisoners:

Another damp, gloomy, dreary day. It rained, more or less, all night, and the wind blew cold and wild. The storm continues up to this hour, say five o'clock P.M. Our room is more like a stable or hog pen than anything else. The floor is wet from one end to the other, and covered with mud. The cold air rushes in from numerous openings, large and small. A comfortable place is not to be found in the whole "shebang." Other divisions are in as evil plight as 23. I have been knocking around to see what has been going on elsewhere, and the same wretched, cheerless, unwholesome appearance is exhibited. Everybody is restless. Like wild beasts in cages, all walk to and fro, uneasy, anxious, comfortless. Some poor fellows here will certainly never be able to endure it. There are several wounded and delicate men among us whom I pity with all my heart.

In this same entry, Handy's diary sheds light on at least one other notable civilian prisoner at Fort Delaware. One of the "delicate men" Handy mentioned was a fellow political prisoner, a Mr. Dougherty, whom the clergyman described as "an aged man, with silver locks" who had a distressing cough and "diseased lungs."

"This poor man," wrote Handy, "(a native of Pennsylvania, and a citizen

of Washington) is imprisoned for the crime of having built a State-house in South Carolina, and then presuming to return to his home."

The unfortunate individual Handy described was William Dougherty, who, along with another gentleman named Hugh Sisson, contracted with the state of South Carolina to fashion the stonework for a beautiful new state house under construction in Columbia in the 1850s and into the 1860s. The firm of Sisson and Dougherty cut the Corinthian capitals of granite for the building, and its name appears in many state legislative records pertaining to the new building.

Documents found in the Provost Marshal's records in the National Archives include instructions to "immediately arrest William Dougherty ... and commit him to Fort Delaware." This document, issued by Charles A. Dana, Assistant Secretary of War, is signed "By order of the President." The person who arrested Mr. Dougherty was Colonel Lafayette Curry Baker, who is described in *Who Was Who in the Union* as a "thoroughly unsavory character." Baker had connections with Lincoln's secretaries of state and war, and through them obtained a position as a special agent of the Provost Marshal General Bureau, a division of the War Department whose members functioned as military police. The provost marshals' duties included the arrest of deserters and persons suspected of "subversive" activities.

According to prison records, William Dougherty was released in February 1865 after taking the oath of allegiance. Afterwards he moved to Memphis, Tennessee, and died there in November 1867. His cause of death was listed as tuberculosis.

On September 10, Handy complained about the water at Fort Delaware again:

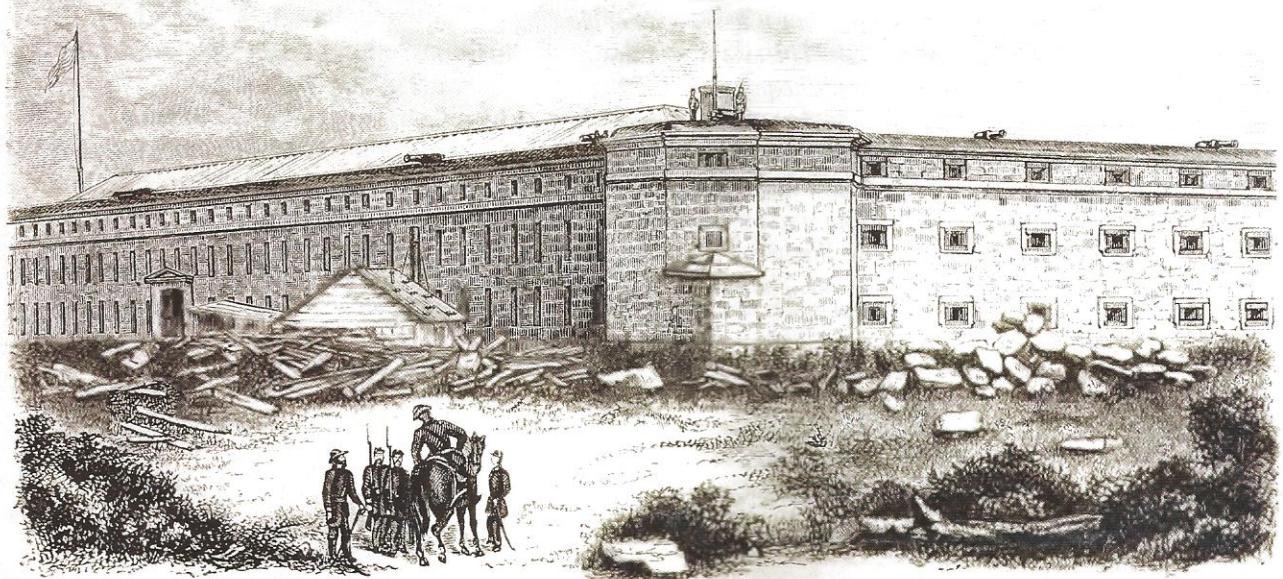
An officer was taken to the guard-house this morning, for drawing a basin of water from one of the tanks. Another poor fellow, who was expecting a comfortable wash, was ordered to empty his

basin in the ditch. The supply of water is always poor; and it is wise, of course, to be as economical as possible; but we have had so much rain of late, that it is hard to be restricted, when there might have been an abundance in the tanks. Much has been said about the filthy water at Andersonville; but I think it could scarcely be worse than the miserable stuff at this place. The hogsheads afford some little relief for drinking purposes; but the ditches are our only resource for washing in every department. The brackish current which comes in from the bay, is usually covered with a green scum, and infested with insects. Everybody resorts to the banks; and it is common to see men at one end washing dishes; a little farther down, a party scrubbing shirts and handkerchiefs — whilst at the lower end, several persons may be noticed in a state of perfect nudity, trying the effect of a salt bath. Added to this, some one will presently come along with a foul vessel, and throwing the contents into the common reservoir, return to quarters, no man saying aught against him. The only defense against this monstrosity of filth is a comparatively clean wash in the early morning, when the tide has had some little opportunity to carry off the accumulations of the preceding day.

On September 21, Rev. Handy noted there was news of the six hundred officers who had departed the previous month. Letters received that day reported they were on a steamer in Charleston harbor, "tired and suffering," but hoping for exchange. The following week, some prisoners were again allowed to receive packages at Fort Delaware:

A "box call" was made this morning for the first time, for a number of weeks. Only about a half-dozen boxes were brought in; but not less than two or three hundred persons congregated at the gate to witness the opening; and all were anxious to know upon what principle they were introduced. It was ascertained that new orders would soon be issued, allowing clothes and other articles, with certain restrictions.

In early October, Handy reported on a period of rainy weather, the



FORT DELAWARE.

arrival of more "boxes," and goods available from the sutler:

"The pen" is a perfect quagmire — in many parts ankle deep; and were it not for the board walks, it would be scarcely possible to get about.

A "box call" was made this morning — chiefly remittances of tobacco from "Dixie." A few boxes of provisions, and some articles of clothing got in. By what rule, or ground of permission this has occurred, we know not, as the late order in relation to special permits (requiring cards on the outside of the boxes, enumerating the articles) has not gone into effect.

The Sutler is doing a driving business. Loads of apples, bread, and miscellaneous articles come in every day; all of which are sold at the highest prices, notwithstanding the late decline in gold. The following schedule will give an idea of what those who have money are now paying for comforts, viz: molasses, \$2.40 per gal.; cheese, 60 cts. per lb.; butter, 80 cts.; coffee, \$1.00; tea, \$2.25; tobacco, \$1.25 per bar, very inferior; sugar, 60 cts per lb.; sweet potatoes, 90 cts. per peck; writing paper, 5 cts. a sheet; envelopes, 2 cts. each.

In the same entry, Handy wrote about seven Confederate officers who had come under religious conviction "in the late revival" and requested to be baptized in the river:

They had been waiting several weeks for an opportunity to have the ordinance administered by immersion. There being two Baptist ministers in the barracks at this time, and the authorities interposing no obstacle, it was concluded to defer the matter no longer. The persons to be baptized were, Capts. G.L. Roberts, B.E. Roberts, and Aud, and Lieuts. Mayes, Street, Tallant, and Huddleston. As most of these young men have recognized me as their spiritual father, I felt it my duty and privilege to accompany them to the water-side. We marched under a guard of twelve men — brother Harris and myself walking arm in arm at the head of the procession...The procession moved solemnly through the gate, with Yankee soldiers posted six on either side. We had to turn an angle around the quarters occupied by the privates, and to pass in view of the hospital. It was a novel sight for "Rebs"

to be marching in that direction to the river. The poor "boys" peeped out of their grated windows, wondering at the scene.

Later in October 1864, Rev. Handy's imprisonment was nearing its end. In one of the last entries recorded in his diary, he continued to observe conditions for the prisoners at Fort Delaware:

Many persons are suffering for necessary clothing. Some have not even a single change. Others are in rags. Indeed, there is a general complaint of unpreparedness for the winter. Numerous applications have been made for permits to write for necessary articles. It is not known whether Gen. Schoepf receives the letters or not; but the prevailing impression is that he does not

The Sutler got in a new supply of apples and sweet and Irish potatoes. Scores [of prisoners] immediately surrounded the door, with buckets, tubs, haversacks, tin pans, boxes, and every conceivable sort of vessel, to supply themselves. They actually pressed upon each other, taking the establishment by storm. Thirteen bar-

rels were emptied in a few minutes

I have, heretofore, made no mention of the rats which abound, almost illimitably, on this island. They run to and fro at all times, both day and night ... Sometimes, both Yankees and prisoners have a grand time hunting this vermin with dogs, ferrets, and sticks. A rat hunt took place today Many large, fat fellows were caught, and carried off in a wheelbarrow — greatly to the joy of some of our Epicures, and particularly of Lieut. W. D. Hall of Texas, who, with sundry compeers, had a fine mess for supper — and yet, I am told, they sighed for more!

On October 13, 1864, two days after this passage was written, Rev. Handy was finally released from Fort Delaware.

I left the Fort in charge of a Lieutenant named Lewis. We crossed the river in a government row-boat. It was about dark, and the clouds were lowering. The water had a strange black look; and as the Yankee sailors plied their oars, I had mingled feelings. I was leaving friends, to go to friends

Restored to his family and his native state of Virginia, the clergyman reflected on his ordeal, and in con-

cluding remarks, he thanked God for his deliverance:

How strange the way by which God has led his servant! It was a way he knew not; but it was a way of blessing.

"The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul! I was brought low, and He helped me...O Lord, I am truly thy servant...and the son of thy handmaid. Thou hast loosed my BONDS!"

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Editor's Note: All the illustrations for this article are from Handy's book published in 1874, *United States Bond; or Duress by Federal Authorities, A Journal of Current Events During an Imprisonment of Fifteen Months at Fort Delaware.*



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