



# THE GETTYSBURG COLLEGE JOURNAL OF THE CIVIL WAR ERA

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Volume 8

Article 4

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May 2018

## After Andersonville: Survivors, Memory and the Bloody Shirt

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Nicholson, Kevin S. (2018) "After Andersonville: Survivors, Memory and the Bloody Shirt," *The Gettysburg College Journal of the Civil War Era*: Vol. 8 , Article 4.

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# After Andersonville: Survivors, Memory and the Bloody Shirt

## **Abstract**

This article details the experiences of survivors of the Andersonville prison camp after the Civil War. Feeling marginalized by the public after returning to the North, prisoners of war worked to demonstrate that their experiences were exceptional enough to merit the same kind of respect and adoration given to other war veterans. In particular survivors utilized the strategy of "waving the bloody shirt," describing purported Confederate atrocities at the camp to a Northern audience looking for figures to blame for the horrors of war. Through prison narratives, veteran organizations, the erection of memorials, and reunions years later, Andersonville survivors worked to establish their role in the Civil War not as forgotten captives, but war heroes.

## **Keywords**

Andersonville prison camp, Camp Sumter, Civil War, prisoners of war, memory, bloody shirt, veterans, veteran organizations, memorials, pensions, post-traumatic stress disorder

# **AFTER ANDERSONVILLE: SURVIVORS, MEMORY, AND THE BLOODY SHIRT**

Kevin Nicholson

On December 7, 1905, three hundred eighty-one former Andersonville prisoners from Pennsylvania gathered at the site of the former prison for the dedication of a monument to the state's victims. The monument's message commemorated the "heroism, sacrifices, and patriotism" of those who perished at Andersonville.<sup>1</sup> Col. James D. Walker, president of the Andersonville Memorial Commission, gave a speech to the crowd praising the "heroic martyrs" who, with their experiences in the prison, helped write "a most brilliant page in military history."<sup>2</sup> In his report on the event, Commission secretary and Andersonville survivor Ezra H. Ripple summarized the impact of the carnage that had unfolded in the prison. Given the sheer number of deaths, he wrote that the prison "was the greatest battlefield of the war." Ripple called for the "heroes" who died under "indescribable torment and misery" to be remembered "for unexampled loyalty under unexampled circumstances."<sup>3</sup> The ceremony served as a clear exemplification of the virtues for which survivors of Andersonville wished to be

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<sup>1</sup> *Pennsylvania at Andersonville, Georgia, Ceremonies at the Dedication of the Memorial Erected by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the National Cemetery at Andersonville, Georgia* (N.p.:C.E. Aughinbaugh, 1909), 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

remembered: as heroic men, just as other Northern soldiers who had the “good fortune” to fight and die on the battlefield.

Andersonville held more than 40,000 captured Union soldiers during its operation; nearly 13,000 of these men died inside its walls. The prisoners who survived the ordeal returned home, welcomed by civilians who could not understand the experience of being a prisoner of war. Upon returning home, many Andersonville survivors felt marginalized relative to other veterans: they were not in every case given the celebratory welcome that ordinary soldiers received, and many had greater difficulty securing pensions in later years. Feelings of estrangement encouraged survivors to write of their experiences as exceptional among veterans. In the years following their release, survivors wrote narratives and formed veterans’ associations to ensure that future generations would remember their experiences.

These prisoners had suffered greatly and believed the courage they exhibited in surviving the camp should not be forgotten. They reminded audiences that bravery was not limited to the battlefield. In doing so, the former prisoners also helped play a part in the “waving of the bloody shirt” in postwar politics that called back to Confederate war atrocities to further the Republican political agenda. Prisoners used similar tactics in their stories when issues such as pension reform arose. Historians have often written about the conditions of the camp and its impact on Northern memory, but few have dealt with the connection between survivors’ postwar experiences, struggle for commemoration, and role in the bloody shirt campaign. In

their stories to the Northern public, Andersonville survivors responded to feelings of postwar marginalization by describing their experiences as exceptional among war veterans, and in doing so, they consequentially played a major role in the postwar bloody shirt campaign.

In May 1865, the last batch of Union soldiers imprisoned at Andersonville was taken to Florida to be exchanged, after which they would be shipped back North to their hometowns. Returning prisoners had different experiences regarding their reception by their communities. Historian James Marten wrote that the length of the trip and their unique situation in returning home helped cause variations in the reception of prisoners of war.<sup>4</sup> Many of the returning prisoners met a positive reception from soldiers and civilians. John McElroy wrote that the guards who received his group in Wilmington, OH, “lavished unstinted kindness” on them, giving them plenty of food and coffee.<sup>5</sup> Other prisoners were not as lucky in their receptions. For example, the 9<sup>th</sup> Minnesota returned home from a Confederate prison only to be forced to sleep on the streets and beg for food from a local bakery.<sup>6</sup> Complicating further the issue of celebrating the return of prisoners of war was the

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<sup>4</sup> James Marten, *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union & Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 40.

<sup>5</sup> John McElroy, *Andersonville: A Story of Rebel Military Prisons, Fifteen Months a Guest of the So-called Southern Conspiracy* (Toledo: D.R. Locke, 1879), 597.

<sup>6</sup> *St. Paul Press* May 30, 1865, found in Walter N. Trenerry, “When the Boys Came Home,” *Minnesota Historical Society* 38 no. 6 (June 1963), 289.

poor health of many survivors. Thousands had died of malnutrition and starvation at Andersonville, and many of those who made it back to the North were in critical condition and required extended hospital visits. Some never made it out of the hospital. Photographs show returning prisoners from Andersonville as emaciated, walking skeletons: Phillip Hattle, shown in the accompanying photo (*appendix*), died after three weeks in the U.S. General Hospital in Annapolis, presumably from a form of malnutrition.<sup>7</sup> In short, while prisoners' reception upon returning to the North was not universally less positive than the celebrations given to returning soldiers, circumstantial differences meant they were not always met with the "guns and bugles" kind of reception given to other returning veterans.

Having returned home to their communities, survivors attempted to revert back to their normal lives by finding jobs and either reuniting with their families or beginning new ones. Some prisoners were able to make a relatively successful transition to life at home after the war. McElroy, a printing apprentice before the war, returned to work in printing in Chicago and Toledo. He became co-editor of the *National Tribune* in Washington by 1884 and took leading positions in the Grand Army of the Republic at

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<sup>7</sup> "St. John's College. U.S. General Hospital Div. No. 2. Annapolis, Md. Private Phillip Hattle, Co. I, 31<sup>st</sup> PA Vol's," photograph, Annapolis, MD, 1865, from Library of Congress, accessed September 16, 2014.

the end of the century.<sup>8</sup> Ira E. Forbes of the 16<sup>th</sup> Connecticut graduated from Yale University, began a career in journalism for several major Connecticut newspapers, and married during the 1870's.<sup>9</sup>

However, the transition was not as seamless for all Andersonville survivors. Some survivors still suffered from maladies stemming from their prison days. Boston Corbett, remembered today as John Wilkes Booth's killer, evidently never made a full physical recovery after his release from Confederate camps. According to hometown friend Thomas Brown, Corbett's bouts with scurvy, chronic diarrhea, piles, and rheumatism in the prison left him "wholly unfit for manual labor of any kind" between the end of the war and Corbett's departure for Kansas in 1878.<sup>10</sup> Treatment of these maladies could also introduce complications for adjustment to civilian life. An anonymous prisoner suffering from insomnia while under the care of Union doctors was given an opiate after begging for help. Upon returning home, he began to suffer from stomach pain and headaches, stating in an 1876 autobiography that "nothing seemed to benefit me." When the conditions did not turn out to be a short-term

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<sup>8</sup> John McConnell McElroy, *The Scotch-Irish McElroys in America, A.D. 1717-1900* (Albany: Fort Orange Press, 1901), 148-49.

<sup>9</sup> Lesley J. Gordon, "Ira Forbes's War," in *Weirding the War: Stories from the Civil War's Ragged Edges*, ed. Stephen William Berry, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 344.

<sup>10</sup> Affidavit of Thomas Brown, 11 August 1882, Boston Corbett's Pension Documents, Kansas State Historical Society, accessed October 20, 2014.

problem, the prisoner implied that the complications were a product of opium dependence.<sup>11</sup>

Psychological problems played an even more substantial role than physical maladies for many survivors. While it was not a formally recognized medical condition in the postwar era, later analysis has shown that many Civil War veterans exhibited symptoms of what is now known as post-traumatic stress disorder. Prisoners of war were especially susceptible to these symptoms. Historian Eric T. Dean, Jr. wrote that boredom, monotony, and deprivation, combined with factors such as severe weight loss and disease, could lead to “serious psychological problems that lingered and intensified in the years following the end of the war.”<sup>12</sup> Given these factors, it is no surprise that a number of Andersonville prisoners encountered problems with psychological trauma. Dean provides the example of Erastus Holmes of Indiana. During his time in Andersonville, Holmes went from 160 pounds to just 85 pounds, while a doctor referred to him as “racked and broken down.”<sup>13</sup> Upon returning home, Holmes experienced flashbacks and was never able to get over his prison experiences: he went so far as to create a replica of the prison camp in his backyard,

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<sup>11</sup> Anonymous, *Opium Eating: An Autobiographical Sketch* (Philadelphia, 1876), 55, found in Jonathan Lewy, “The Army Disease: Drug Addiction and the Civil War,” *War in History* 21 no. 1 (2013), 111-12.

<sup>12</sup> Eric T. Dean, *Shook Over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 81.

<sup>13</sup> Affidavit of James M. Carvin, M.D., February 14, 1887 [constitution], federal pension file of Erastus Holmes [F 5 Ind. Cav.], National Archives, found in Dean, *Shook Over Hell*, 85.

showing it to visitors when they came by.<sup>14</sup> Another notable case of trauma in an Andersonville survivor is that of Boston Corbett. The cumulative effect of his incarceration in prison and the fact that he mistakenly killed Booth took their toll on Corbett. In 1878, he moved to Concordia, Kansas and lived as a hermit for the next ten years, displaying generally unusual behavior. He was given a job as assistant doorkeeper at the state legislature in 1887, but he brandished a pistol and called the lawmakers “blasphemers”; he was subsequently tried and committed to an insane asylum.<sup>15</sup>

In short, many Andersonville survivors struggled to return to civilian life because of complications from their stay in the prison. Maladies including rheumatism, chronic diarrhea, and post-traumatic stress were fairly prevalent among the veteran population. In terms of pensions awarded by the U.S. government, 11.8 percent were for chronic diarrhea and 8.7 percent were for rheumatism. Those who suffered various “diseases of the brain” received a smaller number of pensions. While men suffering from these conditions were awarded pensions, they were rewarded fewer pensions overall than did gunshot wounds (about 25 percent).<sup>16</sup> To be awarded a pension for a disease, a veteran

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<sup>14</sup> Affidavit of Maurice J. Barry, March 18, 1887 [son-in-law], federal pension file of Erastus Holmes, found in Dean, *Shook Over Hell*, 86.

<sup>15</sup> Janet Pease Emery, *It Takes People to Make a Town: The Story of Concordia, Kansas, 1871-1971* (Salina, KS: Arrow, 1970), 91-93, found in Marten, *Sing Not War*, 89.

<sup>16</sup> Charles F. Wooley, *The Irritable Heart of Soldiers and the Origins of Anglo-American Cardiology: The U.S. Civil War (1861) to World War I (1918)* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 40-41, found in Marten, *Sing Not War*, 82.

needed confirmation from either an officer or two comrades, but as the years passed after the end of the war, it was increasingly hard for comrades to remember specific symptoms enough to give sufficient testimony.<sup>17</sup> James Marten wrote that men with “pinned sleeves and wooden legs” who had suffered clear, physical combat injuries were easy targets of admiration to the public. However, the public was less likely to sympathize with veterans who had suffered from chronic illness and psychological trauma because they constituted “misfortunes that could befall anyone.” In general, according to Marten, the public focused on signs of “helpless and dependence” in veterans when it came to recognizing war injuries.<sup>18</sup> Because the injuries Andersonville survivors suffered were in the “less visible” category of injuries, they were more likely to fly under the radar of the public and thus less likely to be awarded pensions down the road.

The uneven reception of Andersonville survivors, as well as the reduced visibility and acknowledgment of injury, only added to a feeling of marginalization cultivated during their wartime experience in the camp. In the early stages of the war, captured prisoners on each side were detained for only a short period before being exchanged via a cartel to their own side. However, when the Union began deploying African American soldiers in 1863, Confederate soldiers severely mistreated black soldiers when they were

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<sup>17</sup> John L. Ransom, *Andersonville Diary, Escape, and List of Dead* (Auburn, NY: 1881), 163.

<sup>18</sup> Marten, *Sing Not War*, 77.

incarcerated in Southern camps. Testifying before Congress on the treatment of prisoners of war, African American soldier Archibald Bogle reported he was refused medical attention despite entering the camp with a battle injury. Later in his stay, several guards threatened to put him in ball and chains for hesitating on an order.<sup>19</sup> Southern refusal to exchange captured black soldiers ultimately caused the exchange system to break down and led to the lengthy prison stays in Andersonville that allowed bad conditions to kill such a high number of prisoners. Feeling abandoned to a grim fate, some prisoners blamed the Union government in their prison diaries for their suffering. Amos Stearns complained that “nothing is done about taking us out of this bull pen.” Placing the blame squarely on the government, he pondered whether it “does not care for men who have served it faithfully.”<sup>20</sup> The fear of being forgotten, then, was a feeling in Andersonville prisoners that existed before release.

Feelings of marginalization continued into the postwar era as many Andersonville survivors felt overlooked in comparison to other veterans. Inconsistency in reception by their home communities and lesser recognition of postwar maladies augmented these sentiments. Consequently, prisoners of war began to voice their opinions on the matter

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<sup>19</sup> U.S. Congress, House, *Report on the Treatment of Prisoners of War by the Rebel Authorities During the War of the Rebellion*, 40<sup>th</sup> Congress, 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., 1869, Report No. 45, Serial 1391, 85, accessed October 2.

<sup>20</sup>*The Civil War Diary of Amos E. Stearns, a Prisoner at Andersonville* (London: Associated University Presses, 1981), 77, found in Benjamin Cloyd, *Haunted by Atrocity*, 18.

of Andersonville and its victims not being given enough attention by the public relative to the larger body of Civil War veterans. In the preface to his prison narrative, McElroy writes that more Union soldiers died in prisons in 1864-65 than did on the front lines of battle. While the public was well-versed with the “heroism and sacrifices” of those who died in battle, “it has heard little of the still greater number who died in the prison pen.”<sup>21</sup> Former prisoner Charles M. Smith wrote that when most thought of the war they primarily remembered the major battles. However, prisoners lived in “circumstances more trying and fatal” than did regular soldiers and, as a result, deserved to be remembered for their “valiant service” as well as their “fortitude, courage and heroism.”<sup>22</sup> Faced with the prospect of being forgotten, Andersonville survivors began to look for ways to make themselves heard and, in the process, convince the Northern public of the exceptional nature of their war experiences.

After the end of the war, Andersonville’s commander Capt. Henry Wirz was put on trial and eventually sentenced to death for his alleged role in the atrocities that occurred under his watch. Modern analysis of Wirz’s situation has suggested that Wirz should not have been held culpable for Andersonville’s death toll. William Marvel, in his effort to exonerate Wirz, described the trial as a sad farce: the judge,

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<sup>21</sup> McElroy, *Andersonville*, xv.

<sup>22</sup> Charles M. Smith, “From Andersonville to Freedom,” 1894, from *Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Rhode Island vol. VIII* (Wilmington: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1993), 87-88, originally published in Providence, RI: Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, 1899.

General Lew Wallace, “convicted the defendant in his own mind,” before the trial had even begun, while prisoners provided flimsy evidence for Wirz’s wrongdoing.<sup>23</sup> However, around the time of Wirz’s trial, the Northern public was already convinced of Wirz’s guilt by word of mouth of former prisoners who provided sensational details of atrocities. A *New York Herald* correspondent reported prisoners telling him that Wirz “would amuse himself by putting down the confined...and then chuckle saying to them, ‘It won’t be long before all you damned Yankees will be in hell.’”<sup>24</sup> Historian Benjamin Cloyd explains the Wirz trial as an attempt to give the “angry Northern public” a “demonic figure” on which they could channel their postwar anger over perceived Confederate war atrocities.<sup>25</sup> In their interactions with the Northern media during the Wirz trial, Andersonville survivors made their first foray into the “bloody shirt” campaign. Highlighting Wirz’s “atrocities” had substantial political ramifications and helped put the freed prisoners in the national spotlight.

At the same time, the visibility of the Wirz trial gave Andersonville survivors their first chance to memorialize their suffering in print. In the years following the war, dozens of prison narratives entered publication with the intent of conveying survivors’ experiences in the camp to the

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<sup>23</sup> William Marvel, *Andersonville: The Last Depot* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 243-244.

<sup>24</sup> “The Horrors of Andersonville,” *Hartford Daily Courant* 29 May 1865.

<sup>25</sup> Benjamin Cloyd, *Haunted By Atrocity: Civil War Prisons in American Memory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 34.

Northern public. The Wirz trial generated an outpouring of new narratives between 1865 and 1866 that emphasized bringing Rebel leaders to justice for war atrocities. Publication of narratives slowed down over the following fifteen years but picked up again in the 1880s when pension reform became a major political issue. Survivors presented these narratives as representations of what truly happened in the prison pen. In his preface, Robert Kellogg wrote that the narrative was “no place for brilliant fiction and exciting romance.”<sup>26</sup> Ann Fabian wrote that prisoners were adamant in promising that what they had written was truthful, whether they were appealing for pensions or writing propaganda.<sup>27</sup> However, while the narratives were effective means of telling prisoners’ stories, they tended to distort facts and sensationalize details. This could be especially true concerning descriptions of Wirz and John H. Winder, commander of the Confederate prison camp system. Marvel wrote that while narratives played a major role in how the public remembered Andersonville, they “range from fairly unreliable to perfectly ridiculous.”<sup>28</sup> Since the narratives were clustered around key events, such as the Wirz trial and looming pension legislation, and used rhetoric that conflicted with mediums such as prisoners’ diary entries, it is likely that many of these authors exaggerated details for

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<sup>26</sup> Robert H. Kellogg, *Life and Death in Rebel Prisons* (Hartford, CT: L. Stebbins, 1870), viii.

<sup>27</sup> Ann Fabian, *The Unvarnished Truth: Personal Narratives in Nineteenth-century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 123.

<sup>28</sup> Marvel, *Andersonville*, 323.

political purposes despite promising truthful accounts. Nonetheless, prison narratives were one of the most prevalent means for Andersonville survivors to commemorate their suffering and show that their experiences were truly exceptional.

Survivors attempted to prove their exceptionalism in their narratives by showing prisoners' ideal virtues. Authors included numerous exultations of themes such as heroism, courage, patriotism, and sacrifice when talking about the large body of prisoners in Andersonville and depicted them as martyrs. Kellogg wrote that households would remember the prisoners for "their attachment to the Union...their bravery and heroism, their courage and constancy."<sup>29</sup> He further added how the soldiers were itching to display such virtues in the field of combat, yearning for "*glorious action*" where they could actively help the Union cause.<sup>30</sup> Augustus C. Hamlin depicts those who perished at Andersonville as "brave defenders" who made "noble sacrifices" for the good of the Union. He urges that their country acknowledge their "heroism" and "martyrdom" in their memory of the prison camp.<sup>31</sup> While the prisoners at Andersonville may not have been involved in combat in the final years of the war, they still possessed many important virtues that justifiably earned them a place in Northern memory.

Escape narratives offered survivors another means to showcase their heroism in the face of an unforgiving enemy.

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<sup>29</sup> Kellogg, *Life and Death in Rebel Prisons*, 359.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>31</sup> Augustus C. Hamlin, *Martyria* (Boston: Lee and Shephard, 1866), 38.

Prisoners often wrote of their escape attempts or attempts of somebody they knew to provide a visual example of the courage these men possessed. In putting their lives on the line to escape the dismal conditions in the prison pen, prisoners could display great courage and heroism, even if the escape attempt failed. H.M. Davidson wrote that the prospects of spending “another terrible winter” in a prison camp seemed to make escape a necessity; it became “simply a case of self-preservation” to make a run for the Union lines.<sup>32</sup> Throughout Davidson’s escape account, he noted the presence of Confederates trying to track him down by frequently mentioning the “savage” hounds “with the intention of devouring us on the spot.”<sup>33</sup> Davidson and his comrades ultimately stumbled into the Confederate, rather than Union, line and were sent back to Andersonville but nonetheless exhibited heroism in risking their lives for a chance at freedom. An account of Charles M. Smith, published by the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS), describes a successful escape from Andersonville with similar themes in mind. While “filled with nervous fear and apprehension” at the prospect of recapture, he remarked that “nature never appeared so beautiful” as he reflected on a chance to escape the horrors of prison.<sup>34</sup> Moving through uncharted territory, Smith and his comrades made it to freedom after two weeks of pursuit

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<sup>32</sup> H.M. Davidson, *Fourteen Months in Southern Prisons* (Milwaukee: Daily Wisconsin Printing House, 1865), 244-45.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>34</sup> Smith, “From Andersonville to Freedom,” *Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States*, 115.

that left the men sickly. Even though they felt they had “not the strength” to reach their destination, the men’s perseverance allowed them to succeed.<sup>35</sup>

Escape narratives also gave survivors the opportunity to distinguish between the Confederate sympathizers trying to recapture them and the Southerners who opposed their cause. Slaves and white Unionists were shown to directly aid runaway prisoners in some stories, helping them by giving directions or providing food and shelter. While both Smith and Davidson did not intentionally seek out such aid, Smith remarked that “the negroes at the south were, by instinct, friendly to the Union soldier” and assisted many prisoners.<sup>36</sup> Davidson’s group stumbled into a group of slaves and, though avoiding contact, were compelled to “remain very quiet in our hiding place” to avoid being noticed by Confederates.<sup>37</sup> These Southerners’ aid to escaped prisoners made them heroes in escape narratives, in contrast to the villainous Confederates.

In addition to these expressions of heroism, survivors highlighted descriptions of suffering through deliberate efforts of Confederate officers. Emphasizing perceived atrocities, or waving a “bloody shirt,” caught the eye of a Northern public appalled by the carnage of the war. Casting blame directly on the Confederacy could strongly influence public responses, particularly in politics. The war undoubtedly had a profound effect on national politics: one

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 143-144

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>37</sup> Davidson, *Fourteen Months in Southern Prisons*, 274-75.

clear example is that, excluding Grover Cleveland, every U.S. President between 1869 and 1901 was a Civil War veteran. Candidates, especially Republican ones, often used their war experiences as evidence for their superior character. Aaron T. Bliss, who spent time in Andersonville and other Southern prisons, earned a position in Congress and was later elected governor of Michigan in 1900. An article in the *Grand Rapids Herald* supporting his candidacy prior to the election highlighted his “indomitable courage, perseverance, and unceasing industry” while noting in boldface that he had spent time in Southern prisons. Speaking about Andersonville, Bliss remarked that the accounts of prisoners’ suffering “had never been exaggerated” and that he likely had only survived due to his high rank.<sup>38</sup> After his death, Bliss’ wartime experiences loomed nearly as large as his political ones. His former lieutenant, Governor Oramel B. Fuller, spoke about Bliss’ patriotism making him “the highest ideal of American citizenship.”<sup>39</sup> Fuller then described how Bliss tore off his shoulder straps and insignia of his rank to avoid being separated from his comrades at Andersonville so he would be subjected to the same conditions as them, demonstrating a clear instance of Bliss’ heroism.<sup>40</sup>

Republican politicians used these bloody shirt tactics to condemn the Confederacy over such atrocities in the war’s

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<sup>38</sup> “For Governor, Col. Aaron T. Bliss,” *Grand Rapids Herald* 17 August 1900, 3.

<sup>39</sup> *Memorial of Aaron Thomas Bliss, Governor of Michigan During the Years 1901-1902 and 1903-1904* (Lansing: 1907), 27-28.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

aftermath, and Andersonville served as a major point of emphasis. A Congressional report on the treatment of prisoners of war with testimony from surviving prisoners of war ruled that the widespread deaths at Andersonville were “not accidental or inevitable,” but were “deliberately planned, and were the direct results of human agency, ingenuity, malice, and cruelty.”<sup>41</sup> In an 1870 speech before the G.A.R. in Washington, D.C., Indiana representative J.P.C. Shanks declared that “it is at the door of the confederate government that I lay the charge of wanton and savage cruelty to helpless prisoners of war,”<sup>42</sup> while reminding the audience of the “emaciated, neglected, crazed, and murdered men” who perished under their charge.<sup>43</sup> Putting the blame for the carnage of the war on the Confederacy helped swing votes in the Republicans’ favor, especially since many veterans voted Republican during Reconstruction. In this manner, wartime suffering evolved from a major aspect of postwar memory into a useful political tool.

Survivors’ narratives published immediately after the war used accounts of their suffering to capitalize on the public vitriol against the Confederacy and its leaders to politicize their suffering. The stories made frequent references to dying prisoners with a theme of the helplessness of the victims. McElroy discussed one prisoner

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<sup>41</sup> U.S. Congress, House, *Report on the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, 160.

<sup>42</sup> *Speech of J.P.C. Shanks of Indiana, on Treatment of Prisoners of War*, (Washington, D.C.: Judd & Detweiler, 1870), 3.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

who lay dying, exposed, and infested with worms in the stockade while being denied medical treatment, remarking that it was a shame that “so gallant a soul” should die “in this miserable fashion.”<sup>44</sup> Given that his trial had generated much attention among the Northern public, Wirz was the most common target of survivors’ blame in the first prison narratives, often earning sensationalized descriptions. Davidson wrote that Wirz had a “tyrannical disposition” and used historical superlatives to attack the camp’s commandant: “He must rank with Nero for cruelty, with Robespierre for wanton butchery, with the Spanish inquisitor for fiendish cunning in the invention of new torments.”<sup>45</sup> In addition to Wirz, prisoners held the Confederate government to blame for their suffering: according to Kellogg, the Confederate policy was to cut rations “to unfit as many of possible for future service.”<sup>46</sup> While narratives openly blamed the Confederacy for the prisoners’ suffering, the earliest ones did not hold the Union government responsible as some prisoners’ diaries had. Intended for a Northern audience, the narratives avoided criticizing the now-martyred Abraham Lincoln and directed full responsibility on the reviled Confederate leaders.

Political developments of the 1870s and 1880s allowed for a new string of narratives for prisoners to convey their suffering with political goals in mind. The most prominent of these goals was to secure pension reform:

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<sup>44</sup> McElroy, *Andersonville*, 357.

<sup>45</sup> Davidson, *Fourteen Months in Southern Prisons*, 137-38.

<sup>46</sup> Kellogg, *Life and Death in Rebel Prisons*, 78.

historian William B. Hesseltine wrote that because it was difficult for prisoners to secure pensions for maladies stemming back to their stay in Andersonville, survivors turned to narratives to convince the public that what had been said about the Confederate role in war atrocities was true.<sup>47</sup> Opponents of pension reform attacked veterans for taking advantage of the pension system. When Grover Cleveland vetoed an 1888 pension bill, the *Chicago Tribune* ran an article celebrating the defeat of the “demagogues, the dead-beats and...deserters and coffee-coolers and bounty-jumpers.”<sup>48</sup> Samuel Boggs’ 1887 narrative preceded a major Congressional pension bill and attacked the Confederate officials vociferously to convey the misery of the Andersonville experience. Wirz was once again a prime target. Boggs described one episode in July 1864 when the commandant responded to a disturbance among several prisoners by ordering his soldiers to fire the camp’s forty-four cannons loaded with grape-shot at the crowded stockade (the order was not carried out).<sup>49</sup> In another passage, Boggs claimed that Winder had once stated that the camp could hold more prisoners due to the mortality of the camp: “Yes, send them on. We are doing more for the Confederacy here, in getting rid of the Yanks, than twenty of Lee’s best regiments of the front.”<sup>50</sup> Such stories of Confederate war

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<sup>47</sup> William Best Hesseltine, *Civil War Prisons: A Study in War Psychology* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1930), 250.

<sup>48</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, quoted in *Ohio Soldier* 7 October 1888, found in Marten, *Sing Not War*, 202.

<sup>49</sup> Samuel S. Boggs, *Eighteen Months a Prisoner Under the Rebel Flag* (Lovington: S.S. Boggs, 1887), 36.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

crimes, whether or not they had actually happened, were clearly written with the intent of convincing the public that former Andersonville prisoners deserved to be awarded pensions for having survived their incarceration. In a final statement supporting pensions for former prisoners, Boggs exclaimed that it was “patriotism” and not “thirteen dollars per month” of pensions that motivated soldiers, and they should be rewarded accordingly.<sup>51</sup>

In addition to writing about their stay in prison, survivors came together to form national associations designed to commemorate their experiences. In addition to participating in associations for the general body of Civil War veterans such as the G.A.R. and the M.O.L.L.U.S., former prisoners of war distinguished themselves by forming separate organizations. Many Andersonville survivors joined groups such as the Andersonville Survivors Association and the National Association of Union Ex-Prisoners of War. The constitution of the latter of these two organizations highlighted its role to “perpetuate the name and fame” of prison camp victims while bringing together living prisoners for joint action to “secure justice to the living and honor to the dead.”<sup>52</sup> The former of the two organizations was formed immediately after the Wirz trial and, as its name suggests, was exclusively for veterans who had spent time in Andersonville. Patrick Bradly, the A.S.A.’s president, wrote in an 1866 letter to Warren Lee

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 62-63.

<sup>52</sup> *Constitution and By-Laws of the National Association of Union Ex-Prisoners of War, Organized 1873* (Washington, DC: Bass & Simms, 1887), 1, accessed 5 October 2014.

Goss about the importance of testifying to “kindness, bravery, and faithful friendship in those scenes of horror” in the prison camp;<sup>53</sup> such testimony allowed groups of survivors to commemorate their experiences and put them in perspective.

Meetings of survivors’ associations consisted mainly of reminiscences of the former prisoners’ wartime experiences. Speakers, in the same way as those who wrote prison narratives, emphasized the heroic traits of those who endured the terrible conditions of prison camps. A 1902 meeting of the National Union Ex-POWs Association in Washington featured speeches by John McElroy and Aaron T. Bliss. McElroy remarked that the suffering of prisoners of war, while tragic, brought the survivors of prison camps closer together than any other group of veterans and allowed them to share their collective memories. After describing a near brush with death in his successful escape attempt from Macon prison, Bliss stated that former prisoners “have made this nation what it is today...The officers of the army could have done nothing had it not been for the men behind the guns.”<sup>54</sup> Such meetings touched on themes of heroism, courage, and sacrifice of prisoners of war, and provided a means for survivors to argue the exceptional case of their war experiences.

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<sup>53</sup> Warren Lee Goss, *The Soldier’s Story of his Captivity at Andersonville, Belle Isle, and other Rebel Prisons* (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1867), 271.

<sup>54</sup> “Ex-Prisoners of War: Gov. Bliss and Col. McElroy were Among the Speakers,” *The Washington Post* 8 October 1902, G2.

In addition to their meetings, survivors' associations were highly active in national politics with issues concerning the treatment of veterans. The issue of pension reform was again a central focus, and the National Ex-POWs Association publicly lobbied for application of more generous pensions. For instance, one September 1887 gathering in Chicago supported a bill proposing that pensions be awarded to men who had served a certain amount of time in prison regardless of their postwar condition, with a greater pension given to those who had spent more time incarcerated.<sup>55</sup> Like narrative writers such as Boggs, the prisoners' stance on pensions was that incarceration was a substantial wartime affliction that entitled them to payment. Organizations on numerous occasions demanded that the government give survivors their due reward. Speaking at the meeting of the Union Ex-POWs Association in 1902, Bliss acknowledged that there had been progress in aiding former prisoners but stated that the government "can never do too much for those who were in prison...I believe the time is near at hand when the government will do more for the ex-prisoners of war."<sup>56</sup>

The power of veterans' suffering played a crucial role in pension legislation, and the bloody shirt remained a powerful weapon for the Republicans trying to pass it. Maine politician James G. Blaine criticized a presidential veto of pension legislation during a Chicago speech in

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<sup>55</sup> "Union Ex-Prisoners of War: They Recommend a Pension Bill and Pass Various Resolutions," *Chicago Daily Tribune* 24 September 1887, 9.

<sup>56</sup> "Ex-Prisoners of War," *The Washington Post* 8 October 1902, G2.

March 1888. He declared that the “sacrifice” soldiers had made “for country’s unity” entitled soldiers to pensions; in addition, he claimed that reduced pensions would put veterans in almshouses, only adding to their “personal sufferings.”<sup>57</sup> Survivors’ organizations recognized the power of their members’ suffering and utilized it to convey their political agenda. At a meeting of the A.S.A. (reformed as the “National Union of the Survivors of Andersonville and Other Southern Camps), survivors debated political ramifications of renaming the organization. The phrase “Southern Camps” was replaced with “Rebel Camps,” while several members objected to a request to drop “Andersonville” from the name as it “was now regarded as the synonym of cruelty and torture all over the country.”<sup>58</sup> The first change gives the Confederates the role in prison atrocities while objection over the use of Andersonville in the name shows that survivors wanted the public to better understand the extent of their suffering. In a later meeting of the National Union Ex-POWs Association, John McElroy claimed that the death toll of prison camps and the lingering maladies inflicted on survivors made the experiences of these men “the greatest tragedy of American history, if not in all history.”<sup>59</sup> Survivors’ associations, therefore, played into postwar waving of the bloody shirt by highlighting their suffering when trying to pursue political goals.

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<sup>57</sup> “Mr. Blaine’s War: The Eloquent Words of the Maine Statesman Enthusiastically Received,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* 21 October 1888, 9.

<sup>58</sup> “Survivors of Andersonville: Annual Reunion – A New Organization Formed,” *The New York Times* 9 June 1880, 3.

<sup>59</sup> “Ex-Prisoners of War,” *The Washington Post* 8 October 1902, G2.

Survivors erected a monument in 1899 at the site of the former prison to show that they had overcome the horrible memories of the past and should be remembered as Union heroes. Calls for a national cemetery in Andersonville began in late 1865, and by May 1866 the cemetery had been established three hundred yards from the still-standing stockade.<sup>60</sup> In the 1890s and 1900s, individual states began building monuments commemorating the captured Union soldiers who died at Andersonville. New Jersey dedicated the first monument on February 3, 1899 and focused on the suffering of the prisoners for the Union cause in “a place where true character developed itself.”<sup>61</sup> The monuments were typically built through cooperation between veterans’ organizations and memorial commissions and lacked the incendiary politically charged rhetoric of narratives or survivors’ associations in earlier years. Cloyd wrote that by this time the Northern states trended toward reconciliation with the South and instead tried to “recognize permanently the laudable aspects of Andersonville.”<sup>62</sup> However, the monuments still praised the exceptional experiences of Andersonville survivors with depictions of courage, heroism, and sacrifice the way earlier forms of public expression had.

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<sup>60</sup> “The National Cemetery at Andersonville, GA,” *The New York Times* 28 May 1866.

<sup>61</sup> New Jersey Monument Commissioners, *Report of the New Jersey Andersonville Monument Commissioners* (Somerville, NJ: Unionist-Gazette Association), 11, found in Cloyd, *Haunted by Atrocity*, 84-85.

<sup>62</sup> Cloyd, *Haunted by Atrocity*, 85.

More states dedicated monuments at the site of Andersonville in the following years, some on a larger and more elaborate scale. For Pennsylvania's dedication, mentioned more specifically earlier, the state provided for the transportation of the three hundred-eighty-one surviving prisoners to attend the ceremony. Maine's monument, dedicated on November 14, 1904, commemorated the "heroic soldiers...who died that the Republic might live." This dedication was not nearly as conciliatory as New Jersey's: S.J. Walton called back to the "barbarity" of Wirz and told a story about a time Winder had allegedly turned away a Southerner who brought a carload of sweet potatoes for the prisoners.<sup>63</sup> 103 survivors attended Connecticut's dedication on October 23, 1907, and several spoke to the crowd at the ceremony. Robert Kellogg spoke of the "heroic sacrifice" of the prisoners who perished and stated that Andersonville would serve as "an object lesson in patriotism" as thousands of Union soldiers stayed loyal until the end. Kellogg also gave a more conciliatory message regarding the Southern role in the atrocities, not wanting to "revive the bitterness of the past," and instead focused on the heroic qualities of the prisoners.<sup>64</sup> At the 1902 Massachusetts dedication, Charles G. Davis remarked that the prisoners "died to secure a Union victory just as much as they would have done in a charging column" and extolled

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<sup>63</sup> *Report of the Maine Andersonville Monument Commissioners* (Augusta, ME: Kennebec Journal Print, 1904), 11.

<sup>64</sup> *Dedication of the Monument at Andersonville, Georgia, October 23, 1907* (Hartford: Published by the State, 1908), 36.

their loyalty in the face of extreme suffering.<sup>65</sup> Fellow survivor Francis C. Curtis spoke of Wirz as “the man who was to make our lives hardly worth living for the next ten months,” and went on to describe the brutal conditions of the camp in detail.<sup>66</sup>

The dedication of monuments at the Andersonville site represented a permanent way to commemorate the exceptional virtues of the men who spent time in the prison. It also allowed surviving prisoners to come together and state their opinions on how Andersonville should be remembered on a larger scale than ever before. By the time the monuments had been dedicated, some of the bitterness towards the South had diminished. Cloyd wrote that in the wake of the United States’ successful war against Spain, there was a growing “sense of optimism” among the American public that “perhaps the terrible divisions” of the war could be healed.<sup>67</sup> All of the state monuments and the vast majority of the speakers at the dedication ceremonies conspicuously leave out mention of Confederate atrocities. The monuments represented an attempt at reconciliation between the Northern prisoners who stayed at Andersonville and the Southern site that hosted the dedications.

On the other hand, some speakers still openly pinned the blame for the atrocities on the Confederate leaders. Not all survivors were willing to forgive the Confederacy for their suffering in Andersonville, and whether atrocities

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<sup>65</sup> Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Report of the Commission on Andersonville Monument*, (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1902), 20.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>67</sup> Cloyd, *Haunted By Atrocity*, 83.

should be mentioned in the dedication of monuments became a point of contention. Historian Lesley Gordon looked at this divide in her book *A Broken Regiment: The 16<sup>th</sup> Connecticut's Civil War*. She noted that several members of the 16<sup>th</sup> Connecticut opposed “Southern apologists seeking to tone down the conditions they faced at Andersonville,” believing that their personal experiences in the camp made depictions of the camp’s conditions more credible.<sup>68</sup> Ira Forbes, another member of the 16<sup>th</sup> Connecticut, had moved toward reconciliation: “I can forgive our bitter foes for the cruelties which they have inflicted upon me. I do not desire revenge.”<sup>69</sup> His stance met opposition from his old comrades and created tensions that motivated Forbes to publish several inflammatory articles about the regiment’s wartime experiences. Reconciliation with the South had thus at least started by the turn of the century, but it was far from a sure thing to the survivors. Regardless of the extent that the surviving prisoners held the Confederacy responsible, the monuments and dedication ceremonies present some of the most powerful language in praising the prisoners’ courage, loyalty, and sacrifice. Speakers referred to Andersonville as the most important battlefield of the war and instrumental to the Union victory while giving those who were incarcerated heroic status.

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<sup>68</sup> Lesley J. Gordon, *A Broken Regiment: The 16<sup>th</sup> Connecticut's Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014), 214.

<sup>69</sup> A.O. Abbott, *Prison Life in the South: At Richmond, Macon, Savannah, Charleston, Columbia, Charlotte, Raleigh, Goldsborough and Andersonville, During the Years 1864 and 1865* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), 206, found in Gordon, “Ira Forbes’ War,” 347.

Andersonville survivors were no longer marginal players who sat out the final decisive battles of the war, but rather, they fought bravely in the toughest struggle of the war.

Through the Congressional testimonies, prison narratives, survivors' associations, and dedication of monuments, Andersonville survivors set out to show that they represented a special case of soldier with their wartime service. While they may not have been as consistently celebrated, and their war wounds were not as visible as those of other veterans, Andersonville survivors banded together, determined not to be forgotten. At every reunion and in every speech, they exhibited their patriotism for the cause of the Union. They wanted to be seen as unique in their extreme patriotism, courage, loyalty, and sacrifice exhibited in enduring the camp's conditions. Furthermore, survivors used contemporary politics as an opportunity to allow themselves to attract the attention of the Northern public. Depictions of suffering and the Confederate role in the atrocities enabled the survivors to pursue political goals while simultaneously getting the attention from the public they needed to commemorate their experiences. The dedication of monuments gave former prisoners a chance to highlight both the extent of their suffering and the role of Wirz and the Confederacy in worsening it. In addition, it showed that survivors were torn about whether or not to forgive the Confederacy, even as public sentiment moved toward reconciliation. The monuments also served as a permanent way of connecting the Andersonville site to its victims, commemorating the heroic virtues of those who were imprisoned there. In short, Andersonville survivors

relied on contemporary developments and a strategy of “waving of the bloody shirt” to catch the public’s eye in their stories to Northern audiences. In doing so, the survivors responded to feelings of postwar marginalization relative to other veterans by proving that they were definitively not marginal players in the Civil War: by contrast, they were instrumental in leading the Union to a victory and exceptional in their heroic virtues.

### **Historiography**

As arguably the most notorious Confederate prison camp of the Civil War, Andersonville has received a substantial amount of attention from historians. Many have written about the conditions of the camp and the experiences of the Union prisoners. Prisoners’ diaries are critical here as they provide a (slightly) less biased form of analysis by those who stayed in the camp. The issue of exactly how much the Confederates should be held responsible for the death toll in the camp had been a point of contention for years after the war, but modern historians now generally recognize that the conditions of the camp were the primary factor and figures like Wirz and Winder were put in an unenviable position. Discussion on the postwar period has focused on the political impact of Andersonville, the contrast between Northern and Southern memory of the camp, and commemoration by both state and national governments as well as former prisoners. Prison narratives, speeches, and monument dedication ceremonies become important modes of analysis for the postwar period.

William Best Hesseltine took a general look at prison camps in 1930's *Civil War Prisons: A Study in War Psychology*. The study was one of the first to look at both Union and Confederate prisons and argued that the assumption that Confederate leaders deliberately killed their prisoners was false. Union prisons had similarly appalling conditions, and it was the breakdown of the prisoner exchange that ultimately caused so many to perish. Hesseltine shows that stories told by Northern prisoners returning from the South caused a "wartime psychosis" in which propaganda was directed at the Confederacy, playing on the "fiercest antagonism" toward the South.<sup>70</sup> His final chapter discusses the aftermath of the Civil War, going over key issues such as the Wirz trial and the emergence of prison narratives and organizations for prison survivors. He writes that narratives were made to "proclaim a patriotic purpose," and while early books were written to bring "the rebel leaders to justice," later narratives aimed to secure pension legislation.<sup>71</sup> Hesseltine's arguments are a bit general and much of the book reads like a history textbook, but it nonetheless provides important background information on prisons and offers a perspective on the Confederate role in the Andersonville deaths. His section on the postwar period gave me significant focus on prison narratives and how they fit into the politics of their time: while he never uses the phrase "bloody shirt," the attempt of prisoners to pursue an agenda by telling stories of their suffering matches the tactic.

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<sup>70</sup> Hesseltine, *Civil War Prisons*, 173-174.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 248-250.

William Marvel's 1994 book *Andersonville: The Last Depot* was instrumental for my research in providing me with important background information on the camp's conditions and the immediate postwar aftermath. Marvel sets out to exonerate Henry Wirz for his alleged role in the atrocities and explained how he was a victim of factors beyond his control as commandant and a vindictive backlash from the North after the war. Marvel argues that the memory of the camp has largely come from the Wirz trial, in which the commandant was "a dead man from the start," and from "dubious sources," such as prison narratives and diaries published after the war such as John Ransom's.<sup>72</sup> Prisoners demonstrated in their wartime diaries, Marvel believes, that they felt their own government had abandoned them in discontinuing the exchange of prisoners, and it was postwar "bloody shirt politics" that caused Andersonville to be remembered as a Confederate-led atrocity.<sup>73</sup> I used this argument to help focus on both the Wirz trial and the contrast between prison diaries and prison narratives. The Wirz trial provided sensational descriptions of Confederate wrongdoing by former prisoners, while narratives continued this theme well into the later part of the nineteenth century. The divergence between prisoners' sentiments during and after the war shows how survivors, trying to best convey their exceptional experiences to the public, tailored their stories to better match the vindictive tales the Northern public wanted to hear.

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<sup>72</sup> Marvel, *Andersonville*, 243, 323.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, x-xi.

James Marten provided a thorough examination of the postwar lives of Civil War veterans in his 2011 book *Sing Not War*. Veterans, according to Marten, had a difficult time adjusting to civilian life and struggled with unemployment, injuries, and psychological trauma. While the South mostly celebrated the heroism of their veterans, Northern sentiment bordered on hostility. The public, remembering veterans through rhetoric of their own heroic qualities, were often unwilling to allow them to take increasingly large amounts of public welfare as they “seemed to expect more of them than of other men.”<sup>74</sup> Marten focuses extensively on pensions and soldier’s homes, arguing that the opposition to each shows that the public was hesitant to allow soldiers to receive public help. As mentioned earlier, he describes how visible injuries such as gunshot wounds were more likely to garner public sympathy than was a physical or mental illness. He devotes a small portion to discuss prisoners of war, describing them as carrying “the most bitter memories of the war” and becoming a “victimized and honored” subset of old soldiers in separating themselves from other veterans.<sup>75</sup> I used Marten’s argument to put prison survivors’ postwar experience in contrast with that of other veterans: as the prisoners suffered maladies that were less visible, they were less likely to receive attention and sympathy from the public. In addition, their conditions generally received fewer pensions than did soldiers who suffered combat injuries. Marten’s book was extremely helpful in helping me see how

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<sup>74</sup> Marten, *Sing Not War*, 7.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 268-69.

Andersonville survivors felt marginalized in the postwar era relative to veterans who primarily saw combat.

Like Marten, Benjamin Cloyd looks at the postwar period but focuses on the evolution of memory of wartime prison camps in *Haunted by Atrocity: Civil War Prisons in American Memory*. Cloyd argues that a divisive memory of prisons existed between the North and South in the years following the war's end. While many Northern voices blamed the Confederacy for the deaths of their prisoners, Southerners sought to defend their prisons and "keep southern honor intact" through a Lost Cause mentality.<sup>76</sup> Monument dedications in the early twentieth century represented a step in the direction of reconciliation as sites such as Andersonville contained Northern monuments on Southern ground commissioned by both sides. However, prisons continued to be a divisive issue—this could be seen particularly clearly with the construction of a monument to Wirz by the United Daughters of the Confederacy aiming to respect his memory more properly than the Northern monuments had.<sup>77</sup> In more recent years, both sides set out to remember the camp more objectively and considered it a symbol of patriotism. I focused primarily on Cloyd's discussion of memory from the war's end to the dedication of monuments at the Andersonville site, as it covers the full range of my inquiry; I also mainly looked at the Northern side of his analysis. Cloyd agrees with Marvel in explaining that the sentiments expressed in prison narratives blaming

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<sup>76</sup> Cloyd, *Haunted By Atrocity*, 69-70.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 101-104.

Confederate leaders were different from those of some prison diaries blaming their own government: prison narratives were therefore tailored to meet the expectations of their Northern audience. His analysis of Northern bitterness toward the South over the issues of prisons helped give me an idea of how survivors were able to perform the task of “waving the bloody shirt” so effectively in their reminiscences.

Eric T. Dean, Jr., takes a different focus in his book *Shook over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War*. Dean uses the memory of Vietnam and the effect that war had on its soldiers to put the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder in the Civil War into perspective. Dean spends a section of his book discussing PTSD in prisoners of war: he stated that anywhere from 46 to 90 percent of World War II POWs suffered from PTSD as a result of weight loss and torture and suggests that Civil War prisoners, while the condition had not been recognized, would likely have met the criteria.<sup>78</sup> Dean provided several examples of former prisoners, including the previous example of Erastus Holmes, who struggled with psychological trauma. Dean’s overarching theme is that, while postwar celebrations and memory of the Civil war as a “glorious” struggle against slavery, soldiers faced severe psychological problems similar to veterans of the Vietnam struggle often known for “tragic loss and waste for life.” He suggests that “we should not be neither so keen to justify the Civil War as necessary and glorious, nor so quick to justify

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<sup>78</sup> Dean, *Shook Over Hell*, 81-82.

the Vietnam War as unnecessary and tragic.”<sup>79</sup> I focused mainly on Dean’s assessment of PTSD in Civil War prisoners of war and used it in my analysis of Andersonville survivors’ postwar difficulties. Dean shows just how prevalent PTSD was for those who survived Confederate camps and how it impacted survivors’ ability to return to civilian life.

Ann Fabian’s *The Unvarnished Truth: Personal Narratives in Nineteenth-Century America* examines different forms of narratives from “lower class” members of American society, paying particular attention to how they tried to represent themselves in print. In trying to document their experiences, Fabian argues that these lesser individuals sometimes had to submit to figures, such as editors, who “claimed a right to exercise social and cultural power over them” and blurred the line of truthfulness of narratives.<sup>80</sup> In her segment on prisoners of war, Fabian discusses how narratives, while providing sensational depictions of suffering and Confederate crimes, promised their audience that they were telling the truth. Whether writing as “propagandists, as petitioners for relief, or as warriors recalling their days of glory,” prisoners assured readers they were being honest.<sup>81</sup> I would argue that Fabian’s idea of lesser individuals submitting to more powerful ones does not completely apply to surviving prisoners of war: regarding the bloody shirt tactics survivors were perhaps opportunistic

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 216-17.

<sup>80</sup> Fabian, *The Unvarnished Truth*, 7.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 123.

in their blurring the lines of truth, and because the rhetoric of prison narratives is similar to that of veterans associations, I cannot fully agree with her. Nonetheless, her examination of the lack of truthfulness of prison narratives matches earlier analyses such as Marvel's and played an important role in my research.

Lesley J. Gordon's piece "Ira Forbes's War" in Stephen William Berry's *Weirding the War* followed the postwar experiences of Forbes, a Connecticut veteran and Andersonville survivor. After the war, Forbes began a successful career as a newspaper writer, winding up with a long-term job with the *Hartford Daily Times*. He also wrote several biographies of his former comrades, detailing their prison experiences. However, when it came time for Connecticut to dedicate a monument for its Andersonville victims, Forbes was left out. Bitter at the rejection, he published several inflammatory articles that reported Confederate atrocities during the war. His views, by highlighting the brutalities of war and outright blaming the Confederacy, went against the official stance of the Connecticut monument and members of his former regiment, the 16<sup>th</sup> Connecticut. Fabian argued that Forbes' clash with some of his former comrades exemplifies the conflict among veterans in remembering the war: some wanted a view "sanitized of the conflict's jarring brutalities and sufferings," while others "refused to forget the war's terrors, failures, and divisions."<sup>82</sup> I used Gordon's piece as an example of an Andersonville survivor who had a

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<sup>82</sup> Gordon, "Ira Forbes's War," 241.

relatively smooth transition to postwar life: until he began to lose his sanity near the end of his life, Forbes had a successful career in the years following the war. His disagreements with former comrades over how much veterans should recognize the atrocities of war also proved relevant, as I noticed some of these differences in separate monument dedications.

Gordon further examines Forbes and his regiment, the 16<sup>th</sup> Connecticut, in her book *A Broken Regiment: The 16<sup>th</sup> Connecticut's Civil War*. The book follows the regiment through their battlefield experiences and stays in Confederate prisons using first-person accounts from the soldiers. I focused on the book's final chapter about the postwar experiences of the surviving members. Gordon looks at soldiers' adjustment to life at home and their later efforts to show the world of their valor and heroism despite being held out of combat for an extended period of time. Gordon argues that members of the regiment used stories of imprisonment to "emphasize not merely the horror" of the camp, "but also a new brand of manly bravery."<sup>83</sup> As noted previously, along the way the regiment's survivors became divided over how to interpret their Andersonville experience: Ira Forbes had a falling out with the 16<sup>th</sup>'s main record-keeper George Q. Whitney over whether to take a conciliatory stance toward the Confederacy.<sup>84</sup> I used Gordon's chapter as an example of how survivors became divided over the issue of reconciliation with the former

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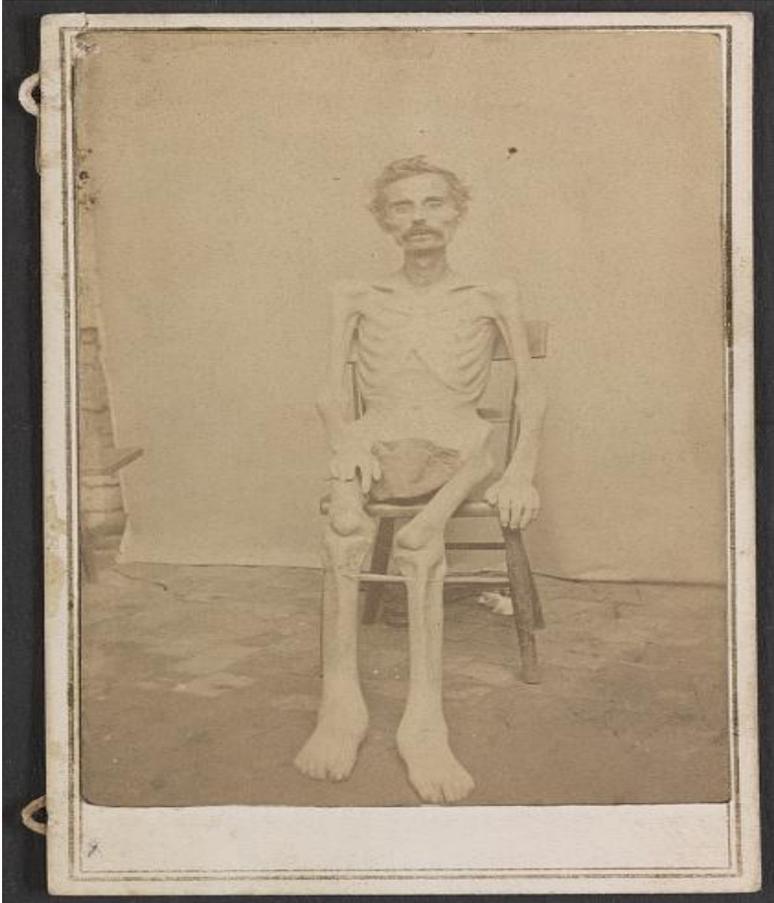
<sup>83</sup> Gordon, *A Broken Regiment*, 213.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 203-205.

Confederacy in the postwar years. While public sentiment may have been moving toward reconciliation leading up to the monument dedications at Andersonville, survivors were not all willing to let go of the horrible suffering they had endured at the camp.

Historians, in short, have studied various aspects of the experiences of Andersonville prisoners both during and after the war. In particular, they have given a great deal of attention to the issue of how survivors understood their prison experiences and tried to convey them to the public. In using sensational and idealized rhetoric in narratives and statements, survivors tried to make it evident that they had suffered remarkably. Part of this involved attacking the Confederate leaders, and historians such as Marvel and Hesseltine have worked to find a more objective view on Andersonville that takes some of the blame off the Confederacy's shoulders. Very limited attention has been given to the marginalization of survivors of prison camps relative to the larger body of veterans. Marten discusses how Northern veterans in general struggled to be respected in the postwar era but fails to completely distinguish POWs from this body. Survivors themselves stated that they believed the experiences of prisoners of war had been relatively overlooked next to their comrades who fought on the battlefield. Consequently, my work set out to connect the three different issues of postwar marginalization of Andersonville survivors, how they wished to be remembered, and the political connotations of their struggle to gain the public's attention.

**Appendix**



Phillip Hattle, 31<sup>st</sup> PA, taken at U.S. General Hospital, Annapolis, MD in June 1865. Admitted June 6 and died on June 25. (Library of Congress)

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