

## **Sixteen Months In Rebel Prisons, by the First Prisoner In Andersonville**

As told by Graham McCamant Meadville to Betty Lee Meadville (daughter of Peter, Graham's son), and  
typed by Johnelle Zook Larson (daughter of Vivian, daughter of Joshua, Graham's son)

It is altogether probable that the impressions, which are commonly received from reading the histories written about the War of the Rebellion, are greatly out of proportion to the real facts since, in most instances, undue attention is given to what the Officers did and the work, which was done by the great ranks of the private soldier, is overlooked.

Officers of the Army have told their story and told it well and truly. Orators and poets have spoken and sung the story to a thrilling effect. The newspapers of the country have been filled with the story of the War for the Union: its good and evil fortunes. But, few have taken in hand to set forth the story of the private soldier in the ranks; how he lived in Camp; fought in action, and pined away in Prison Pen.

Many men were found in the ranks, who have always told of their marches and battles; aye: the story a Southern prison. And while not desiring to be among the number of the famous yet, I have thought if you will patiently go back with me to those stirring times and scenes, I will relate to you how, when and where I became a prisoner of war.

On the Fourth of July, 1863, our Regiment began its preparations for the march, embarking from St. Helena Island, S.C., we put out to sea and laid along the coast until the night of the Seventh, when we ran into the mouth of Stone river, and landed on Folby Island. On July eighth at night we started out but came back into Camp again. On the night of the ninth, started again, and embarking in small boats rowed all night up the river. On the morning of the tenth, after rowing all night on the Stone River, we directed the boats' bows toward the South end of Morris Island and at a given signal, the command to pull away, was given by our gallant Commander, General Strong.

Of course, all pulled with a will, so that very soon the keel of the boats struck on the sand and immediately we were charging out of the boats on the enemy, who were entrenched on the shore. We routed them, took their works, and formed in line of battle just outside and back of the works, we had just taken.

While waiting for further orders, one of the General's aides came up and asked our Colonel whether his Regiment would charge that Fort – a Fort that was just ahead of us toward Wagner and Sumter. “Battalion, by division at Company distance, right flank right face, march. By division close order, march” was the only answer given.

Companies A and F stood fast, while Companies D and I, C and H, G and E and K and B right faced, marched in our rear, which movement formed our Battalion in close order, when the command was given to charge. Away we went, not knowing what we might meet, until the white flag was displayed above the ramparts of the Fort and they surrendered without a shot, which please everyone. The prisoners were taken in charge and sent to the rear under guard.

We passed through and beyond the Fort, formed line of battle; right faced out on the ocean beach and by the left in front marched up the beach toward old Sumter, until it rose into view. But as it came into sight, something else began to come. Some of the big round shot and shell, which looked like Mother's old iron kettle, came rolling along the beach to meet us. We quickly gave them the right of way however, and heard the command: "Battalion, by the left flank, left face, march," and we left the beach for the Island again. When we were fairly on the Island, we were halted and commenced to throw up some earthworks for protection, while the Company cooks got some coffee ready. There we laid all the rest of the day and on into the night, and then we were ordered up and marched quickly along, just how far I do not know, but we were halted, ordered, to uncap our guns, quietly fix bayonets and lie down on our arms and not speak above a whisper. Every tin cup was ordered to be put inside our haversacks and anything else that would make a noise. We were also ordered to keep awake. What others did, I do not know, but I slept until someone shook me and whispered, "Attention." The commands were whispered all along the line. We were marched a little further up the beach and then into the left again on the Island and formed in division columns and closed in mass.

This seemed like business and to make it look more so, each man had a white band sewed around his left arm, between the elbow and shoulder, to distinguish his comrade from the enemy in the dark.

Right here let me interject a little dream story. My messmate, who by the way was my file leader and number one in front in our group, was a young Scotchman about my own age and build and rather superstitious. I had a dream on our way to Pocotaligo October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1862, and my interpretation of it came true. While we lay on our arms this night, I had another dream and John was mixed up in it. I had told him, "John look out, I had an ugly dream." He nudged me with his elbow saying, "Oh Peg" – Peggie Ann was my Camp cognomen – "shut up, you're a bad omen." Just then as the dawn began to break, our gallant General Strong stepped out quickly in front of our Regiment and said in a low tone, "Colonel Strawbridge, charge Fort Wagner, spike its guns; down over Gregg, spike its guns, and retreat back over the Island to this point." I tell you that took the wind out of our sails. But, I nudged Morgie and whispered, "What did I tell you?" That was the last time I spoke to him. The order to charge in double quick time was given and before we reached the Fort, the enemy opened fire upon us, poor John was instantly killed, and I was taken prisoner.

How I came to be taken, I will briefly relate. A few of my comrades and I dashed into the moat and climbed up the ramparts, where we engaged the enemy in hand to hand, along with the Seventh Connecticut and drove them from their guns.

We were badly cut up and needed reinforcements, but the Regiments that were to support us for some reason failed and we were ordered to retreat. The enemy heard this as soon as we did, and although on the run, rallied and came at us again. In the confusion of the retreat, we ran against the stockade and lost some time before we got out in front of the Fort again.

Levi Wirebaugh, John Detweiler, Sergeant Tom McGlathery and myself were in that little squad with a Corporal of Company A. The Corporal and I laid down on the top and at the edge of the moat and began firing back at the Rebs; the Corporal (McVey was his name) telling the boys not to retreat. We fired several shots, when I got a lead fast in my gun and told the Corporal and he said, "Peg, we might as well get back."

Just then, I felt a shot and all was blank for a while. How long I do not know. When I came to myself again, I was crawling on my hands and knees back from the fort. Amidst the groans and cries of the wounded and dying, I recognized one voice close to me, behind a small knoll. Crawling behind it partly for protection, for the Rebs were firing rapidly into our wounded, and partly to see the sufferer, who was no other than Jim Gilland, one of my own Company and found him praying for all he was worth. I said to him, "Come, Jim, let us get out of this." He answered "Oh, no, Peg, I am killed." I replied, "You're not. Come on we will be killed, or taken if we stay here. Where are you hit?" He answered, "In the head." I said, "I will bind it up, come." He told me where to find his handkerchief and I began.

Just here, I want to tell the funniest thing that ever happened to me. When I began to tie up Jim's head, I found a lump as big as his whole head, and horror of horrors, as I took hold of it, it fell into my hands. I thought it was his head and was about to run, when Jim spoke. Of course, I was only a boy and I guess I would have carried that head back, if I had gotten away with it. I said, "Jim, what's come off of your head?" His reply was, "I guess it's something I got out of my haversack," and sure enough, it was about two and a half pounds of army sugar. Then badly frightened as I was, I laughed out-right and Jim prayed.

I felt a little like General Kearney's Irishman. Two of the sons of Erin made a bargain when they went out of Kearney that whichever one of them got wounded first, the other would take care of him. Jimmie got it first in the leg. Pat started with his pard over his shoulder, head behind. When the General met them he said, "Pat, where are you going with that man?"

"To the rear," says Pat. The General said, "It's no use, he's dead." Pat contended that he only had his leg shot off and told the General of his bargain. "But," said the General, "He's got his head off, he's dead." Pat looked around as he laid him down and said, "The d---- liar! He told me he only had his leg off."

Poor Jim told me he was killed and here his head fell into my hands and he kept on praying. I got his head tied up and was turning to run, when two Johnnies stuck their firearms at us and said "Surrender?" I said, "Well, I guess we're going to." Of course, we did. They said, "Hurry up there and get in, your fellows are going to charge again. And help the fellow along," which I was going to do. So taking us along we soon came upon Milt Gregg, another of Company F, shot in the groin, and I was ordered to help him also, which I did.

We passed into the Fort over the right angle on the seaside, which is where the right of our division and the first division of the Seventh Connecticut fought. One young Seventh Connecticut boy, about my age, sixteen or seventeen years old, lay there dead. The butt of his rifle lay in his hand and his saber bayonet six inches or more, was sticking out through a Rebel officer's back. His revolver lay by his hand. He was dead and his gun was empty, showing how hard they fought.

Arriving inside the Fort I found we were not alone. Ninety-eight besides myself were there more or less slightly wounded or shaken up. Besides the more badly wounded, who had to be carried to the boat at Gregg's Point, we were all marched and put on board for Charleston. The Rebels took their dead and wounded on the same boat to the City.

Arriving at Charleston there was in waiting to receive us, over a Company of soldiers to take us into town. I had, from childhood heard so much about Charleston as the birthplace of secession and sure enough, they had raised a large family. I felt a little like the old darkie, who saw the Yankee Army for the first time and asked me if we'uns were all Uncle Sam's children. I said, "Yes, we are." He looked upward with a heavenly expression on his black face and said, "Good Lord, how I would like to see dem good old people."

The Company was mostly Irishmen. One young fellow, a son of Erin's fair Isle, said to me, "Hello, young fellow, duz yez know what we are going to do wid yez?" I answered, "No, and we don't care." "Take yez out and hang yez," was his reply. "You dare not do it if you will give us a chance to fight," I said, "You did not do it over there." He shut one eye and squinted the other and laughing said, "Divil the hair of your white head will we harrum, lad."

Then the order was given to march and we didn't halt until we reached the gates of our first prison, Charleston Jail, and then began a prison life of sixteen months and ten days. But thanks to a cheerful disposition and a good healthy sound constitution brim full of hope, I lived and starved through it all and am here to tell you from memory alone, how I did it.

We were placed in cells and doors locked. About four o'clock, as nearly as I can tell, we were taken out into the yard and given rations – corn grits, fresh beef and salt, a big kettle and wood to make a fire to cook the rations.

That night General Beauregard issued new clothing to us. I think now of what Jim Duffy, our Irishman, said, when he heard it, "That means no good, at all, at all." We were ordered to take off our Union blue and put on pure Rebel gray – the common butternut. Of course, we were like the man who ate the crow, we didn't like it but had to do it because Bure said so and what he said, had to go. So an older codger, who said he was a Union man told us and bought our greenbacks, one hundred for one, to come North on and we thought that was better than a quarrel with old Beauregard.

We remained in Charleston Jail until July 14<sup>th</sup>, when we signed a separate parole sheet of which they kept a copy. We were ordered to get ready to go home. We received rations – nine circular hard tack, a good-sized piece of razorback, sow meat - and marched to the railroad station in charge of a Home Guard Company, nearly all Jewish Merchants in the City of Charleston, accompanied by their Negro servants, as the Barons of old were, by their armed vassals.

On our way out of the City, we met the reinforcements coming to Beauregard, but as we were dressed in gray, they took little or no notice of us. Once aboard the cars, we were not long starting and were soon out of town on our way, we afterwards learned, to Richmond. We rode all night and the next day crossed the Cape Fear River into Wilmington, N.C., where we again

took the cars and sped on to Raleigh. After a short stop there, we were again off and our next stop was at Weldon. There we had some fun and heard our first news from the battle of Gettysburg. We saw a great many freshly wounded Johnnies around and being ourselves dressed in gray, got to talking with them quite freely out of the car doors. They supposed we were Johnnies too. We inquired where they were wounded and one great, long, lank fellow stepped up and said, "Gettysburg." Tom McGlathery came, just then to the door and said, "Say Johnnie, how is Lee getting along up in Pennsylvania?" "Didn't youens hear? All cut to pieces and retreating back into old Virginia." By that time, all in the car were up and Tom said, "Boys, Lee's cut all up and liked like h--- and retreating. Three cheers for General Meade and the Army of the Potomac." By this time a great crowd of them gathered around and one Johnnie said, "Why them thar are Yanks." "You're right we are," said Tom. Then they asked where we were caught and how we came to have those clothes on, and we told them, as our train moved on towards Petersburg, where we next landed and stayed all night. The next morning we took a train and landed in Richmond.

Now friends, all we received to eat from the Rebels on our four day's journey, for we reached Richmond about two o'clock the next day, July 17<sup>th</sup>, was the nine hard tack and the piece of razorback.

They received us at Libby, counted us as they turned us in and when they counted the last one, the ninety-ninth, the Reb who did the counting gave him a rousing kick and said 100. We were disappointed in Libby; because we thought we would soon be back to help the boys take the City. But, that was left for others to do, and they did it too.

We remained in Libby until the 16<sup>th</sup> day of August, living on a scant half pound of wheat bran bread and a pint of ... of ... well now friend, I guess I am a little like the Irishman, who was at work in a ditch and a temperance lecturer came along and stopping said, "Good morning, my good man. I have a problem to solve. Maybe you can help me out?"

"Indade oi will if oi can, sir."

"Can you tell me where the dividing line comes between the moderate drinker and the drunkard?"

"Let me see. Oi think oi have it. You see that hog going over the wau there? That's moin. I carried him home in my arms a little piggy, a ten good months ago. Oi fed him plenty av milk and mush and potatoes and cooked cabbage and he grew and got big like he is now. But sir, oi could not tell you when he quit being a piggy and he begun to be a hog. Neither can oi tell when the motherit drinker stops being a motherit and begins to be a hoo hoo. Hold on Patrick, that would be slander on my piggy." So friends, to call it soup would be a slander on the soup. I will say a pint of warm water, sometimes called soup, with a little grease and a black bean in it. While we were in Libby, we fared badly. Once a day is all we were fed on that scant fare. We soon began to get weak, then poor and thin and bowed down like old men, although the most of us were only seventeen, a few eighteen and nineteen, and but one or two over that.

While there we had several sensations or excitements and a fight, which was against the rules and they tied one fellow up by the thumbs, with his hands behind his back, until only the tips of his toes touched the floor. This broke one of his thumbs and we cut him down. When the Johnnie that had tied him up came back, we produced the man and showed him why we had cut

him down and told him he should never tie up another one of our numbers and he never did. I think we would have killed him if he had tried it.

Then we had a fight, which raised a great crowd on the outside. One of the Seventh Connecticut told one of the boys that they were the best Regiment in the Fort Wagner fight and were the first on the Fort. He got the lie and your humble servant was in the ring in a minute, Pennsylvania versus Connecticut, Marquis of Queensbury style. It was to a finish. When the Johnnies got in, we were washed and slipped upstairs and I had laid down to sleep. The boys told the officer that it was only fooling; the boys were only playing them a Yankee trick. He said they didn't want to see any of our tricks, anymore. Tom McGlathery told him, "We will show you a big one some of these days."

That night the officers imprisoned in the next room, or wing, escaped. In the morning they found it out, and they doubled the guard and jammed us all up on the attic along with the prisoners on the two floors above and we had to stay there all day and all night without food or drink until the next day. Twenty-four hours on half ration, twenty-four hours without anything and then a half ration to satisfy our hunger. But the Union Officers were gone and we laughed at them and rigged them about their Yankee trick.

Sunday, August 16<sup>th</sup>, we landed on Belle Island and it was better than Libby. The pure air outdoors, in the middle of the river was better than food to us, who had been used to camp life and plenty to eat. We also had the water to bathe in and we could keep clean, but the rations were the same – soup and corn bread.

It began to get cold at night. We had no blankets. We had blankets in Libby, but had to leave them there. Our clothes began to get thin and ragged, with winter coming on apace. August passed and September brought the boys, who were wounded at Fort Wagner. I will never forget how they looked when they saw us there. There were McGlathery, Detweiler, Wirebaugh, and myself out of Company F, not badly wounded, who had gone to the Jail; Brown, Morgan, Gilland, Knox and Lafferty and Gray badly wounded who went to Columbia Hospital.

Glad to see us? That would be putting it mildly. We ran together like a lot of schoolgirls, shook, hugged and slapped one another as if we were unable to realize that we and they were alive, as if we had risen from the dead. After the expressions of gladness and joy were overcome the blues. "Sorry to see you here boys, we're in a bad box." "Sooner be at Fort Wagner." "Can't stand it long."

Tom Morgan, a noble friend, a brave and gallant soldier and today one of the best citizens in our County; brother of my messmate, who was killed at Wagner, was the first to say, "Well, Peg, I guess you are having a hard time of it."

You will remember my camp name was Peggie Ann. I was only sixteen, when I went out, white-headed and mischievous. I was apparently in trouble all the time. Tom sympathized with me more than he did with any of the other boys except his brother, my mate and thought I was too tender and young to live long in such a place and under such treatment.

Just here let me tell you more about this big, red-headed Scotchman; active, strong as an ordinary horse, wind like a foxhound. He was hard to kill. Why, the lick he got at Wagner would have knocked the head off of anyone else. He was struck with what afterward proved to be a Belgian rifle ball just at the left corner of the left eye, the ball glancing downward, lodged under his ear. His head was twice its natural size. He said to me, "Peg, I guess that it is all up with me." I said, "No, no, Tom, you will get alright," and washed off the sand and blood with handkerchief, which cheered him up greatly. That was the last I saw of him until we met at Belle Island.

Then we began to look around to find quarters for our friends. We managed to take them in with us. Our tents were the old U.S. Sibley; wigwam fashion and held about fourteen soldiers comfortably. We managed to accommodate about fourteen soldiers. I mean twenty-five soldiers in one of them. As I said before, I will never forget how they looked. The once stalwart form of Brown, six feet two inches in his stockings, straight as any Sullivan, now bowed like an old man. The piercing eye, quickstep, and movement of Morgan, now dull and slow. The funny joke of McGlathery – the hearty laugh of the rest and the ready reply to fun was all gone. Hunger, famine, gaunt and ghastly had seized the magnificent specimens of Northern manhood in its strangling grasp. The blood receded, the sinews relaxed, the muscles grown powerless and those, who but three months before were sturdy Northmen, had shrunken into old men and children. And all this brought about by the men who were of finer clay and who desired to run a government, whose foundation was the universal and long since adopted law of mankind: Do unto others as you would that men shall do unto you.

Time rolled on, and there came a period when we thought there was a little chance for our getting back. Some time in October, a special exchange of about 300 men was effected. It took the first three detachments of *Nunsties*, as we were called in prison. Your speaker was one of them, as he thought. The wounded of our boys that came upon the Island last were in a higher or later ninety and of course were not in for that exchange. McGlathery, Detweiler, Wirebaugh and myself were in the exchange. When the time came to call the roll, those who were in the first three nineties were in line at the gate. The rebel officer called them out. There was ahead of me a Michigan boy by the name of Ben Fisher. His name was called and I was at the gate. But, oh, the disappointment. He was the last, I was left.

Dreams of meeting Mother, Ruth and friends at home; how they passed sorrowfully away from their boy's vision. But, my old redheaded and hopeful war horse came up, took me by the arm and led me away, saying, "Never mind Peg. As you will be the next, you are now number one." I was then the oldest prisoner by right on the Island.

We then began to look around, to see how we might get the rest of Company F into our mess. Everything comes to him who waits. That been my dear old Mother's rule and mine too. But sometimes I didn't wait. I tried, like the old Darkie to come and fetch it. Tom McGlathery had by some means saved his silver hunting case watch, and let me tell you right here, those honest Johnnies could be bought. Tom had the interest of all the boys at heart. To prove this, he afterward became Captain and was killed leading his boys in the charge of Fort Fisher. He threw his watch back over the embankment to us and directed us to buy the rest of the boys into our

mess, which was the first on the island. The next day we were counted and the boys in with me, and the Johnnies got the watch.

But I was sad. I became sick and inflammation of the bowels set in and I was taken, on November 8<sup>th</sup>, to Richmond Hospital, just a square above Libby, on the opposite side of the same street. While there my friends were paroled, and I was again left.

The hospital prison was a little better than the Convalescent Prison, and the convalescent prison a little better than the prison. I will say here that the doctor there was a good one and gave us all the attention possible and healed me. I was sent to Pemberton, just in front of Libby, convalescent. But friends, they turned me out barefooted and without a coat on!

I went to the gate and asked the guard to let me see Lieutenant Hobeau, our Commander. For a wonder, he lead me out to his tent and I told him who I was. He took me and put me in my place as number one, first mess, first ninety, Belle Island. You want to know of course, who this Commander was? I will be only too glad to tell you that he was not made of Virginia clay or any of their common earth. He was a Frenchman and had a big heart which was touched by my boyish face and he took pity on me. That afternoon he brought me a pair of a dead man's old shoes, but my feet were so frozen and swelled that I could not get them on. So wore them.

So, matters went on. That was the 13<sup>th</sup> day of January, 1864. On the 17<sup>th</sup> day of February, following a bitter cold day, the river frozen over, we were taken out, marched to Richmond and put in Pemberton. I was in my bare feet. Big Hank Lewis of a Michigan Regiment helped me along over the ice and snow. That night about one o'clock, we were ordered into line, marched out upon the cold stone street. I shall never forget that night, clear, cold and still. Friends, were you ever so cold you could not speak or shiver? If you were, and hungry too, you know how your soldier boys felt that night of the 17<sup>th</sup> day of February, 1864.

We were marched forward, across the bridge to the cars, loaded on and started, we knew not whither. Leaving Pemberton, we received a corn brick (as we called them) as we passed out. It was too cold to eat them until we got into the cars. After the boxcar got full, it warmed up and I went to sleep with my head on Lewis' lap; poor Hite Cox holding my frozen feet in his lap. I wakened at Gaston, where we changed roads. I ate my corn brick and felt better. The weather was milder as we journeyed south.

We arrived at Raleigh in the evening and marched out into the woods and camped for the night without anything to eat but were permitted to build a fire. We laid down and slept all night. In the morning got circular hard tack and raw razorback for rations, took the cars and started southward, still not knowing whither. Our next stop was at Charlotte where we also laid in the woods overnight. It was a cold frosty night. The guards let us go to a corncrib and take some ears. We ate it raw and also parched some of it on the fire and ate it.

At Thomasville, we were wrecked. That was on Sunday. One of my friends, a Scotchman by the name of James Duffy, was a Free Mason. He made himself known to some of the old citizens and they took him out of the cars, while they were getting the engine on the track, and gave him something to eat and a slave brought a basketful along for him to the car. He

shared it with Cox and myself. Among the eatables was a chicken pie made of duck. I got one of the web feet, is how I know it was duck.

The engine was put on at last and we passed through Columbia and Branchville and arrived at Augusta, where we got rations again at night – one corn loaf, nine hard tack and one pound of razorback, which was all we got to eat in nine days. The next ration, we received in Andersonville. Macon also was passed and the night of the 26<sup>th</sup> day of February, 1864, came on.

Just at the break of day, we were ordered off the cars formed into line, myself leading, and marched into the prison, afterwards infamously known as Andersonville.

This prison was opened and occupied by Union prisoners, soldiers and sailors, mariners and citizens, February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1864. I have the sad honor of being the first prisoner in that most horrible and revolting of all Military prisons since the days of the Black Hole of Calcutta.

Then began a life, so wonderful and awfully terrible that were I to tell you all, I know I would not be believed. But I will try to give you a fair picture of it.

We were formed into nineties as before and into thirties, each having a Captain, who drew our rations for us. We were counted to see if any had gotten away and when all were found present, they ordered rations and after some time brought us corned beef and corn meal. As there were only 270 of us, the rations were reasonably large. Then too, wood was plenty and we soon had a fire and were cooking our corned beef and meal, husks and all.

After breakfast we began looking around for a place to erect a house. Streets were laid out and the work of pitching tents began. Hit Cox, Tom Bailey, Johnnie Shore and I build together. Ike Rickerd, Pete Canan, Alex Ingram, Jene Daly, Pat Walsh, Jim Harris, Tom Morpky and John Barr built together. English, Irish, Dutch, Scotch and Yankee. We four built as large a house as the others even did; but we were a happy family, and miserable sufferers. We built shed roofs with poles, thatched with pine boughs, weather-boarded with the same material, carpeted with leaves and dead pine boughs. Cox and I had a blanket and a half between us, the rest of the boys fared about the same.

The day was beautiful and warm, the weather fine and dry. It seemed as if nature was trying to do for us what our fellow-men failed to do, as you will see after a while. The Rebels were trying to erect a stockade. A large force of slaves were camped at the northwest corner of the camp.

Andersonville prison proper contained about twelve acres of ground. About three acres of that was swamp, uninhabitable at the beginning but afterwards made so by the industry and ingenuity of the Yankee in his desire for self-preservation.

They constructed Dutch wheelbarrows by splitting clapboards of the large pine logs that were unused by the Rebels, and dug the little stream, made it solid dry ground and encamped upon it as the thousands were gathered there from the various battlefields. This little stream which ran through the prison was fairly good water in the winter but tepid and bad in the

summer. To make matters worse for us, they built the cookhouse on this stream afterwards on the west side. The water flowing eastward from it became filthy. All the slops and grease were thrown into it by the rebels, and their soldiers camped on it. We had to use it or go without water.

We had no tools to dig wells with and for months suffered for pure water and beside this the weather soon got hot in Georgia. To show how badly off we were for drinking water we dug wells with knives and forks, using our hands for shovels – twenty, thirty and as much as eighty feet deep, drawing up the dirt and sand with little cook buckets.

After the number of prisoners reached the thousands, they gave us some shovels, and picks to dig sinks and places to bury the filth of the camp and keep away disease and we borrowed them to dig wells and tunnels to escape with. But these wells were not cribbed or walled, so they were constantly caving in and we were constantly kept digging new ones. We were encamped near the sally-port on the north side and before the notorious dead line was run, we could go to the stockade. On one occasion in the evening I was in the corner talking to those slave, who had finished their day's work and were getting their supper, when a big black fellow came up and said, "Boss, look out for what comes over. Look up." I looked up and there came over a hot hoe cake about as large as the top of a good sized dishpan and after it about six pound piece of razorback. I picked it up and went to my tent and my pard and I had a good supper. But the Rebs put a stop to that. The slaves were the best and only friends the prisoners had. The old Rebel soldiers who had seen service and had been in the field were not so bad, but the young fellows, the recruits and conscripts, shot a helpless prisoner of war as coolly as he would have killed a snake or cat.

Time wore on in much the same way until there were cooped up in that spot of twelve acres at one time in Jun 37,000 men. Think of it, dying at the rate of 140 a day of hunger and thirst! There was no disease there, no contagion, only a death-producing dearth of food and water. Our nakedness, we could endure in that climate if we could only have had the nourishment. Wirz could well say, he was killing more of doing more for the cause at Andersonville than Lee was in front of Richmond.

But I saw him frightened by unarmed prisoners of war, until he shook. It was on the occasion of the outbursting of the Providential spring. I tell you my hearers, that knocked the talk out of them. It was in the month of June. The fatality was the greatest among us in June and July. The water was scarce and bad. The days and the nights too were made hideous with the crying, groaning and dying of your soldier boys, until the dried and sunburned earth could no longer refuse her offspring but opening her bowels of compassion, when human hearts refused, she sent forth a beautiful gushing stream of pure cold water, and we were relieved and our thirst was slacked.

The boys seemed to take it as a matter of course. The rebels were in a quandary. Wirz came in to look at it. We had gotten two boards and made a V-shaped trough and stationed a police at the place to guard it. Wirz stood and looked at it for a while and turned to walk out, when someone yelled, "Look out, Dutchie, the ground will open and swallow you up." At this raillery, the boys let out such a groan or wail that he looked back over his shoulder and ran as

fast as he could to get out. He was actually afraid it would. He was a hard hearted Sweede, made worse by General Winder, who had been an officer of the United States Army before the war and was than in command of that department of the so-called Confederacy.

But the spring seemed to have the effect of softening them somewhat for they sent in more picks and shovels with orders to organize police squads for cleaning up the camp and police for guards also, and they would furnish them an extra ration. We obeyed the order and they sent the extra rations for the workmen. We had a Mayor, Chief of Police and Patrol. Men were arrested for stealing and punished with the lash. If a prisoner stole from his comrade prisoner, he was tried before the Mayor. If found guilty, he was sentenced to a certain number of lashes across the bare back; the prisoner robbed laid on the lash. He did not get it very hard for we were not able; we hadn't the strength.

There was a band of raiders, who not only robbed but killed and they go so bold that we had to form a vigilance committee to look after them, with orders to arrest the band. We arrested about 25, called a court, tried them and found six guilty of murder in the first degree. On the 11<sup>th</sup> day of July, we hung them by the neck until they were dead; Delany, Curtis, McConnel, Connelly, Sorsby and Collins from Philadelphia, New York and Boston. That was a great day. The rest were put in the chain gang for a month. That broke up the raiding. Limber Jim was the Chief of Police and the executioners, his deputies, were the policemen of the Camp. Collins broke the rope and was hung again until he was dead. After the hanging we had a prize fight for diversion. Things went on as usual except that we had more and better water.

The Governor of the State and his Staff visited and viewed the camp and prison shortly after this and pronounced everything in good sanitary condition; the prisoners well fed and cared for.

Sometime in June, the prisoners from Plymouth came in. We called them Pilgrims. They died very fast. I was about naked at that time. I sold a fence rail to one of them for two dollars, bought two meal sacks, some soap and salt with the money and a sailor made me a pair of breeches out of the sacks for a spoonful of salt and an inch square of soap. That was a mighty fine suit.

Then one of the boys had some money and he bought meat from the Johnnies and sold it to the boys. The Pilgrims had some money and I used to peddle meat down among them on commission. I would start out with five pieces of meat. I sold four and kept one or sold it and kept the money. I was always busy, gathering wood, selling something for someone or helping someone who was sick and in distress

One boy out of my regiment got the scurvy badly. I sold salt and bought him potatoes and cured him. He is now at home in Altoona. A young Irishman by the name of Pat Moonsey came in with the Pilgrims. I used to go to school with him. I found him one morning, when I was peddling meat, lying at the root of a pine stump, so lousy and dirty his mother would not have known him. I took him, shaved his head, took him to the run, washed him and his clothes and saved his life. He came to see me after he came home.

When I was candidate for Sheriff, having secured the nomination, I got on the train one evening to go to Altoona, and you know how everybody likes the winning candidate, John Jones, that was my colored patient's name, was on and after everybody else that wanted to shake hands had done so, John came up laughing and called me by name and hugged me and cried. I thought he was drunk. He said, "Don't you know me?" I said, "No." He said, "Don't you remember in Andersonville, how you washed my leg?" I said, "Are you the fellow that had the maggots in your stump?" He said, "Yes." I told my friends who he was. He was living in Tyrone, just six miles from me. A few years ago I made an affidavit and helped him to get his pension which was pushed through by Captain Jones of the Sheridan Troop.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of June it began to rain and rained some every day for twenty-two days and on the twenty-second day, it rained right and we had a great flood. The stockade formed a dam on the west, outside, and on the east, inside. The west stockade broke and the driftwood came in all over the camp, in swamp or flat, and you ought to have seen the boys swimming for it. I had been sick with some kind of fever, but I got up and out into that flood and caught wood and I got well.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, there was an old time celebration. The troops had a sham battle. On one side of the ravine were the Yanks and on the other were the Johnnies, and as a Yankee from Vermont said, "They fit and they fit," but the Johnnies whipped the Yanks and took them all prisoners but did not send them in. The country people came in flocks.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of September, I was again moved to Savannah where we remained until the 12<sup>th</sup> of October. At Savanna, I tried my hand at escaping. Another fellow and myself got out all right and started down the river, after getting out of Savannah. We were out six days and just when we thought we were free, were captured and taken back.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> day of October, we were taken one hundred and forty miles into the country to Millen, a general rendezvous for prisoners. Sherman had gotten too close and it was not safe to keep the men at Andersonville. We remained there until the 21<sup>st</sup> of November, when I was paroled and carried on the back of a black slave, to the cars at Millen station.

Just here, and in conclusion, let me tell you another act of kindness by an ignorant colored slave. I was so far gone that I could not stand erect. The excitement of going home was so great that I managed to get outside the prison and fainted and fell. The officer in charge ordered this black man to take me to the hospital, which meant a corner of the southeast end of the stockade – a place to die. He waited until I revived and could see and talk. I saw the rest were gone. I said, "Sam, won't you help me along? I have been here so long and if I go over there," pointing with my hand in the direction of the corner, "I will die and I have a Mother and sister at home, I would like to see." He said, "All right, Boss, get on my back, I will carry you over." He got down on his hands and knees and I got on his back. He trotted along until we caught up with the other boys. The Captain did not take notice of us for some time, and when he did he said, "I Told you to take that man to the hospital." The slave said, "Captain, I was coming this way and thought I would bring him along." The Captain said, "Then you carry him to the station and keep up too, you black rascal." He pinched my leg. A gentle hint and kept on. I was

not heavy, only weighting 72 pounds. I weighed 185 pounds when I was captured or a few days before.

We got to the station, he left me down, and went away saying, "I come again." After a bit he came back with a pan of cooked meat, razorback, a hoe cake, and a cup of coffee and setting it down, he said, "Thar, Boss, I guess you're hungry." I ate it, felt good and said goodbye to my black friend. The cars soon came and I never saw my black friend again. Oh, I often think of him and the warmest and best place in my house is his, if he ever comes my way and if he's dead, he's safe. He will have his reward. "For as much as ye did it unto one of these, you have done it unto me." Will certainly be his plaudit.

I arrived safely at Fort Pulaski, where our boats lay on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November, and until I reach that land across the last river, I never will be as happy as when I beheld "Old Glory" waving majestically over the land of the free.

We got on board, received something to eat and clothes, sailed along the coast homeward to Annapolis; got paid and a furlough home. I soon saw Mother and sister and all the loved ones and was happy.

Graham McCamant Meadville's father, Josua B. Meadville, was born January 1, 1808 in Scotland, immigrated to the United States in 1829, and died April 14, 1853.

His mother, Judith Katherine Ginter born September 4, 1806, in Morris Township, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, and died August 19, 1904 in Moose Township, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.

Graham McCamant Meadville was born June 15, 1844, in Warriors Mark, Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, married Anna Mary McClellan September 25, 1872, in Blaire County, Pennsylvania, and died October 6, 1928 in Lawton, Commanche County Oklahoma.

Graham and Anna had eight children: Flora May, Joshua William, Blanche Bertrand, Mary Beamer, Graham Garfield, Peter Russell, Ruth Elizabeth, and Harry Wayne.

Besides being in the United States Army, Graham also served three years as Blair County sheriff, one year as Blair County deputy sheriff, rancher (fine horses and cattle), and property owner.

He was a tall man of fine personal appearance, energetic and active in whatever he undertook, ranked high as a man of business ability and spirit, and of public enterprise. He was a republican, leaned toward the Baptist faith as did his ancestors, and one of the higher degree Masons in the United States.