Sixteen Months In Rebel Prisons
by the First Prisoner In Andersonville
As told by Graham McCamant Meadville, Dody Marshall’s Great-Great Grandfather

Editors note: In looking for an article for this May-June newsletter I felt it is a good place for a story centered around the memorial holiday. Here are excerpts from a long story from Dody’s Great-Great Grandfather, the first prisoner in Andersonville.

The Camp Sumter military prison at Andersonville was one of the largest Confederate military prisons during the Civil War. During the 14 months the prison existed, more than 45,000 Union soldiers were confined here. Of these, almost 13,000 died here. Today, Andersonville National Historic Site is a memorial to all American prisoners of war throughout the nation’s history.

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 spoken and sung the story to a thrilling effect. The newspapers of the country have spoken and sung the story to a thrilling effect. The newspapers of the country have spoken and sung the story to a thrilling effect. The newspapers of the country have spoken and sung the story to a thrilling effect. The newspapers of the country have spoken and sung the story to a thrilling effect. The newspapers of the country have spoken and sung the story to a thrilling effect.

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 pleased everyone. The prisoners were taken in charge and sent to the rear under guard.

How I came to be taken, I will briefly relate. A few of my comrades and I dashed into a 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.

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.

Arriving inside the Fort I found we were not alone. Ninety-eight besides myself were there. We were all marched and put on board a boat for Charleston. The Rebels took their dead and wounded on the same boat to the city.

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. (keep in mind that Graham was 16 years old).

We remained in Charleston Jail until July 14th—and then marched to the railroad station.

Once aboard the cars, we were not long starting and were soon out of town on our way to Richmond. Then we took the cars and sped on to Raleigh.

We passed through Columbia and Branchville and arrived at Augusta, where we got rations again at night. The next ration, we received in Andersonville. Macon also was passed and the night of the 26th 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 27th, 1864.

Because I was first in line, I have the sad honor being the first prisoner in that most horrible and revolting of all Military prisons since the days of the Black Hole of Calcutta.

Andersonville prison proper contained about twelve acres of ground. About three acres of that was swamp. It was operated for 14 months and was designed to hold about 10,000 prisoners. At its peak it held 45,000.

The full story as told by Dody’s Great-Great Grandfather is 14 pages and filled with so many interesting details of Graham’s journey it was very difficult to piece together even what you see here.

A copy of the full text is available on our website www.3rmuseum.org or at the...
I am having a hard time keeping track of how fast the weeds are growing and the number of trees that are falling on the 3 1/2 acres of the Museum complex. Then there are the telephone poles that are breaking up.

We have had the CALFIRE Mt. Home crew out 3 times since January. First it was tree removal that had fallen on the Heritage Trail, then weed eating and more tree trimming.

The telephone pole that AT&T and Spectrum uses, located next to the new water tanks, broke in half and dropped the lines down about 20 feet over the dirt road behind the Bequette House. I contacted AT&T on May 14 and four large trucks with poles were replacing the broken pole and another pole that was about to go, two days later. I almost forgot, 1/2 of one oak tree came down across one of the fire trucks, but no damage noticed. So much safer now and my stress level came down 3 points.

Our garden of native plants in front of the museum is doing very well. We have a water system from the Bahwell Ditch that gives them a drink every day about 6am. Special thanks to Annie’s Garden Grooming for ‘grooming’ the garden for us.

PUBLIC RESTROOMS — Yes, the county is still putting their final touches on the plans and they have given us a new time-line for construction starting in August with completion by the end of December 2019. We will ‘continue’ to keep you informed.

A big thank you to Bank of the Sierra for providing a grant of $500 to help with the purchase of a new computer for administration/accounting and software. Each year our accounting has been getting more complex. It is time to go to a Quickbooks program that will interact with the Bank of the Sierra accounts, our Square merchant credit card account, and our CPA. Additionally, the Bank donated $300 towards our Hot Dog Festival and purchased a business membership.

Within the past 30 days we have lost a few good friends so I will close out my column with a quote from Washington Irving:

“Sweet is the memory of distant friends! Like the mellow rays of the departing sun, it falls tenderly, yet sadly, on the heart.”
This is a letter from Thelma to a Connie;

Dear Connie;

Since I last spoke with you, I have thought of an ingenious way to pass the time and relieve boredom. It was such a marvelous idea and did not require an excessive amount of effort to execute and in turn was quite amazing, once you thought of it. I don't really know how I came to think of it except that my mind was free of any encumbrances and it just popped in.

Now if I can remember what it was that attracted my attention. Gracious, at the minute I believe I have forgotten what it was. Well, anyway, here is another thing I thought up while I was taking a nap recently and it is equally as fascinating as the former and I think you will be interested in hearing it because it is something that would greatly benefit humanity, if anything could.

Now what was it?? Drat, I do believe I have forgotten what it was also. As I faintly remember or don't remember it had something to do with cooking or on the other hand maybe coal mining or raising chickens. Well, anyway, surely it will come to me if I try to stop thinking about it. Oh yes, I remember what it was. No, that's not it. Well, I will contact you if I think of it.

THELMA

Thelma’s book is available at the Museum gift shop or on our on-line gift shop.
Established: December 1991
Museum Opened: October 2000
501(c)3 Non-Profit Organization

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Stop by and look over our full line of books.

On-Line Store
New items listed
https://squareup.com/store/3rmuseum

2019 Important Dates

June 1 8am to 2pm
Community Yard Sale at the Museum
See page 3 for details

Jul 13, 10am to 4pm
HOT DOG FESTIVAL
At the Museum

August
Construction starts on Public Restrooms
With completion by late December

Oct 5, 4pm to 7pm
Drive Thru BBQ at the Museum

Oct 8-9-10, all day each day
California Native-American Days at Museum
Field trips for 4th graders from the valley

Dec 7, 5pm to 7pm
Community Holiday Caroling
At the museum.