HONORS THESIS

by

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PRISON LITERATURE OF ANDERSONVILLE

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The deluge of literature that flooded from participants in the drama of Andersonville prison was not literature of an objective or rational nature. The scars from this experience were left upon the prisoners and their keepers and were visible in the narratives they produced. Man's complexity in both his motives and emotions was aggravated by the hatred and bitterness aroused during the Civil War. Thus the actual reasons behind the accounts written were as complex as each individual man. To pursue a Freudian line of thinking, possibly not even the participants themselves recognized the true motives behind their writings.

When the Civil War erupted, there had been little previous thought by either side to the preparations necessary to conduct a war. The prison systems of both the North and the South suffered from this lack of preparation with unexpected masses of men needing the essentials of life; makeshift arrangements due to most officials' convictions of a brief conflict; and gross mismanagement at the prison sites. The Southern prisons fared worse basically due to the meagre resources of the Confederacy, especially in regards to its food supply.¹

The prisoners of the Confederacy captured in the East had been concentrated in Richmond during the beginning years

of the war. However, the removal of these prisoners was made expedient when the theater of war centered in the Richmond area, creating a strain on Confederate supplies with both the large number of prisoners and General Lee's Army near Richmond. Also behind the removal was the desire to prevent these Federal soldiers from being released if Richmond fell into Union hands. General John H. Winder sent his son to locate a suitable site for the new Confederate prison. His selection was Andersonville, Georgia, so on February 18, 1864, the first group of Confederate prisoners left Belle Isle in Richmond, arriving at their destination on February 25, 1864. Though the move was later claimed to have been a premeditated plot to murder Federal soldiers, in reality it was in the interest of humanity and self-preservation of the Confederacy. That the best interest of humanity was not served at Andersonville became apparent when nearly one-third of the prisoners died in seven months. These deaths and the living skeletons who survived to return home from Andersonville prison served to kindle the flames of revenge against the South and resulted in a profuse flow of prison literature.

The initial complaints about the care of the Federal soldiers in Confederate prisons were issued by the United States


4Rhodes, History, V, 494.
government and began as early as 1862, developing into a routine point of contention by the next year. In response to the Federal government labeling Confederates as savage barbarians, the Confederate government issued its own condemnation of the treatment Confederates received at the hands of the Union. According to the eminent American historian, James Ford Rhodes, "The statements of those in authority must be regarded as partisan documents issued for the purpose of swaying public sentiments." These reports helped to establish the prevailing mood of outrage on both sides and caused many observations to be exaggerated to an even greater extent by the public mind.

The height of this sensational literature by government investigations was published in May, 1864 by the Committee on the Conduct of the War, a joint committee of the Northern Congress. These findings referred to as "Report No. 67," contained eight photographs of Federal soldiers returning home from Richmond prisons which convinced all of the rebel intent to kill all prisoners that fell into their hands. The Union soldiers pictured were grotesque-looking with skin barely stretching over their skeletal frames, both undernourished and diseased. The committee then turned to a study of Federal prisons which were described in glowing terms of efficiency.

The results of "Report No. 67" were twofold. The Confederate Congress established a joint committee to investigate the

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5Ibid., p. 490
conditions and treatment of prisoners of war. Its report either
directly denied the charges against the South or proposed an
equally violent countercharge against the North. The final
conclusion reached by the investigations was that the North was
totally to blame for the needless suffering and destruction of
human life because of its refusal to exchange prisoners. 7
Secondly, a joint resolution was introduced in the Union Congress ad-
vising the North to retaliate for the cruel treatment its sold-
diers were receiving in Confederate prisons by giving rebels in
Northern prisons the same treatment. Though this measure was
rejected for reasons of the "prevailing sentiments of humanity." 8
it demonstrated well the prevailing mood of the Congress and
public sentiment.

With the interest sparked by government reports, even
before the end of the war, Federals began publishing books
about their prison experiences in the Confederacy. The accounts
of Andersonville written by ex-prisoners focused on basically
one of two central themes. Either the author was convinced of
a Confederate plot to kill and cripple as many Federal soldiers
as possible or the author was interested in denying this charge
and defending the actions of the Confederates. The former type
had its greatest influx from 1864 to roughly the late 1880's,
while the latter approach did not make a strong appearance on

7 William Best Hesseltine, Civil War Prisons, A Study In War
Psychology (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1930),
pp. 208-209.

8 Stevenson, Southern Side, pp. 173-177.
the literary scene until the 1890's and early twentieth century. The theme of supporting the actions of the Confederacy was also supported by ex-prison officials who wrote during this later period.

The majority of accounts written during the period immediately after the war until the 1880's bore marked resemblance to one another. Their uniformity and the sheer mass of their testimony was sufficient to convince all of the truthfulness of the charges levied. The most obvious comparison made was the common thread of plot which each narrative followed. The typical narrative begins with the prisoner's capture upon which he was taken to the nearest prison, robbed of all his possessions by the Confederates, crowded into a stock car and taken by rail to Andersonville. After several days with little or no rations, the prisoner arrived at Andersonville to be met by the "devil incarnate", Captain Henry Wirz, who as commander of the interior of the stockade greeted the new arrivals with curses and threats of the horrors to come. The tales then consisted of an accounting of all the miseries of prison life including, the swamp in the middle of the stockade, poor water, murders along the dead-line, little or no food, lack of wood, makeshift shelters, the "raiders", cruel guards, and bloodhounds who tracked down escaped prisoners. From William Hesseltine's observations on Andersonville prison literature, "The consistently harrowing description

of Andersonville was followed by stories of lesser tragedies in the prisons of Charleston, Savannah, and Millen or the greater horrors of Florence.  

The early narratives also related many of the same basic assumptions about Andersonville prison life. One of the favorite deductions made by the prisoners was that a Confederate soldier killing a prisoner who crossed over the deadline received a furlough of sixty days and for wounding one was granted a furlough of thirty days. This accounted in their minds for the large number of deaths along the deadline and the seemingly over-anxious guards. Another conviction shared by many was the accusation that the Confederate doctors used an impure virus for the smallpox vaccination given to the prisoners. If this failed to exterminate the patient, the wound received from this vaccination would not heal allowing gangrene to take over the limb.

However, undoubtably the most commonly held assumption of these early accounts centered upon the idea of an evil plot devised by Jefferson Davis and his cabinet to destroy the North's manhood. Robert Kellogg, a leading witness at Henry Wirz's

10 Hesseltine, Civil War Prisons, pp. 250-251.


trial, stated "the policy of the Confederate authorities respecting us seemed to be, to unfit as many as possible for future service." 13 Other prisoners were convinced that the plan was not simply to cripple or maime, but murder them by deliberate starvation, exposure to the elements, and the lack of medical attention. 14 One foundation for these assumptions was based on such statements as the one accredited to General Winder, made when he was surveying the grave sites of the prisoners that he was "'doing more for this Confederacy than twenty regiments.'" 15 The legacy of these early writings was not forgotten when in 1957 the editor of an abridged version of John McElroy's narrative wrote with conviction:

And Andersonville's unsurpassed record for depravity, disease, the atrocities inflicted, and the unparalleled mortality rate, cannot be denied - and there was no excuse for it, except that, despite the denials of Wirz and Winder, it seems to have been the calculated design of these men, and McElroy places the blame for Andersonville squarely where it belongs when he accuses them. 16

The conviction of this plot relied on other sources besides statements attributed to Confederate officials. With the flames of abolitionism still burning brightly, the conclusion

reached was that the treatment the prisoners received was what should be expected from a population brutalized by the effects of slavery. The torture and deliberate cruelty of prison life was not understandable to many, but Samuel Boggs reminded his fellow ex-prisoners "that slavery clouded the conscience and calloused the hearts of our cruel keepers, whose noteriety for cruelty as slave-drivers gained their appointments as prison-keepers."\(^\text{17}\) The practice of using bloodhounds to track escaped prisoners was considered a Southern practice for runaway slaves, only switched to a new victim.\(^\text{18}\) Another writer was forced to the conviction that the Southern whites were racially degenerate and that was a clue to the horrors of Andersonville.\(^\text{19}\)

Finally, amidst all the suffering, the prisoners needed a scapegoat, someone to lay the blame upon for their misery and unanimously they singled out Captain Henry Wirz, commander of the prison's interior. At the close of the war, the public began to clamor for revenge as loved ones returned home crippled for life or did not return at all from Confederate prisons. Both the press and the government reports helped to generate the mood of outrage and desire for revenge. In finding a victim upon which to vent their wrath, the public and government

\(^{17}\) Boggs, *Eighteen Months*, p. 5.


\(^{19}\) Nevins, *Bibliography*, I, 193.
turned to the prison that had become synonymous with the worse horrors of the war, Andersonville. Since General John Winder had died before the end of the war, the role of the scapegoat was selected for Henry Wirz. On May 7, 1865, Captain Wirz was arrested and then tried in a military court which violated the Constitution's provisions for a public trial, grand jury indictment, and jury for all but impeachment cases. The trial itself was held in the Capitol building under the dome to create further excitement of public opinion. The New York Tribune took the exceptional stand among the newspapers, refusing to carry sensationalistic stories and condemning the other newspapers because "it is not the duty of the newspapers to try him." The trial and the testimony by the ex-prisoners such as Robert Kellogg and Henry Davidson formed the basis for their published accounts, as well as being liberally borrowed from by other writers. Many writers sited evidence from the trial proceedings as a basis for confirming their charges against the Confederacy and verifying the horrible conditions they were forced to tolerate. The trial resulted in all the bitterness and passions of the war concentrated on the shoulders of this one man. The effect of this central focus on Andersonville prison

20 Stevenson, *Southern Side*, pp. 120-121.
literature was demonstrated by the conformity of the early writers to the same basic narrative, differentiated only by minor personal incidents.  

Not only did writers borrow from the trial records, but some readily admitted using other published accounts in compiling their account. Henry Davidson in the preface of his work, *Prisoners of War and Military Prisons*, listed the works of Lt. A. C. Roach, Lt. A. O. Abbott, John L. Ransom, and Major R. H. Kellogg as all contributing to his final product. Samuel S. Boggs in *Eighteen Monthes A Prisoner Under the Rebel Flag* footnoted his account of the raiders' hanging as John McElroy's description. The basic tenets behind the condemnation of Wirz and prison life were established with Wirz's trial and merely regurgitated by other ex-prisoners in their own individualistic style.

Wirz's lawyer, Lewis Schade, suggested in a public letter dated April 4, 1867, that the reason behind Wirz's arrest, trial, and execution was a plan to implicate Jefferson Davis of treason. Davis had first been suspected in President Lincoln's assassination, but his enemies felt they lacked the evidence to hang him. Taking a different approach, these men looked to the tragedy of Andersonville to find the material they needed to convict Davis. Thus, the arrest of Wirz and his trial were to bring out all the evidence concerning

Andersonville prison and to determine who was at fault. This idea was further endorsed by Schade’s revelation that Federal officials were willing to commute Wirz’s sentence if he would implicate Davis as the originator of conspiracy plans. 25

Another reason suggested for why Wirz became the prisoners’ object of hostility was because he was very obviously a foreigner. In the chronicle of Andersonville written by Allen Abbott, his first remarks about Wirz were a “sinister-looking little foreigner.” 26 The fact that Wirz had difficulty speaking was a disadvantage in his contact with the prisoners. His manner was impulsive, nervous, and straightforward, seeming to alienate the people around him, even the Confederate guards were quoted as unsatisfied under his command. The majority of prisoners belonged to a class of people apt to allow their judgement to be clouded by prejudices. 27 Regardless of why, the fact was that Henry Wirz became “the object of that popular injustice that personifies causes and demands victims for unpopular movements.” 28

These early accounts were written in the grips of the controversy over Southern treatment of war prisoners. These ex-prisoners’ attitudes and expressions about Wirz reveal the hatred

25 Stevenson, Southern Side, pp. 131-132.


27 Hesseltine, Civil War Prisons, pp. 15-16.

28 Page, True Story, p. 228.
and scars left after the war. Robert Kellogg anxious to conform with the monster image of Wirz seemingly contradicted himself. Kellogg had left a knife while out digging for roots. When he asked to go back to retrieve it, the sergeant refused, but Captain Wirz overheard the conversation and accompanied Kellogg allowing him to get his knife.29 Here was an act of generosity and consideration on the part of Wirz. Yet, Kellogg wrote that Wirz was "a wretch of the first or worse degree; insolent, overbearing, heartless, and of course a coward."30 A fairer analysis of Wirz had to wait until the late nineteenth century and then these views often seemed to slant as far in the other direction of persuasion.

The reasons behind the writing of the early Andersonville accounts were many and often more complex than the stated need for the truth. Warren Goss exemplified the cry issued for truth in the preface of his narrative, "Justice to the living who suffered impartial history, and the martyred dead, a full, unexaggerated record by the survivor of these horrors."31 An obvious motivation was a pecuniary one, though more subtle reasons played an equal role. The Federals released from their military service often faced unemployment and desperate financial situations. Ex-prisoners decided to capitalize on the interest created by their return from a Confederate prison

29Kellogg, Life and Death, p. 152.
30Ibid., p. 87.
31Goss, Soldier's Story, p. 4.
and wrote a book on their prison experiences. The desire to gain revenue from his book was openly stated by John Ransom, "I hope some day when I have got rich out of this book (if that time should ever come) to go to Minnesota," and this desire was probably secretly hoped for by most authors. Samuel Boggs in his plea for money made it seem an obligation of every loyal citizen to buy his book, "and your mite contributed in the purchase of this little book is proof of your kindly consideration for those who have suffered what you never can."

Another financial angle behind these prison accounts concerned the legislation for pensions in the eighties. The law required that in order to receive a pension a Federal soldier must have the testimony of two comrades or an officer as to the origin of the disease. With this legislation passed nearly twenty years after the war, the possibility of obtaining sufficient evidence to meet the requirements of the law was slight. The motive behind some Andersonville narratives written in the 1880's was to convince the public and Congress, that a prisoner could not have lived in Andersonville prison without carrying away scars of the experience. John Ransom's account which was originally published in 1881, was particularly interested in convincing Congress to award the occupants of

34 Boggs, Eighteen Months, p. 95.
35 Ransom, Diary, p. 247.
Andersonville pensions for mere proof of their stay there. "There is no doubt that all were more or less disabled, and the mere fact of their having spent the summer in Andersonville, should be evidence enough to procure assistance from the government."36 Samuel Boggs sought to prove to his readers the high moral character of the Federal soldier, loyal to his country, not seduced by the rebel offers though starving to death. Then he proceeded to condemn the individuals who justified pension vetoes on the contention that the men had joined the army only to receive the thirteen dollars per month in the beginning.37

Obvious to a reader also was the desire of many to retell stories of excitement and adventure. Many narratives which began as social commentaries on prison life in Andersonville and the causes behind the suffering, gradually slipped into tales of their individual attempts and successes at escape always filled with danger. Sergeant Oats apologized for his diversion, "'Prison Life', in which thousands were involved with me, has dwindled down to a personal narrative, and I will not bore you by asking you to go over the whole course of our wanderings."38 Some possibly wished to share the limelight with the soldier who had remained on the

\[36\text{Ibid.}\]
\[37\text{Boggs, Eighteen Months, p. 74.}\]
\[38\text{Sergeant Oats, Prison Life in Dixie (Chicago: Central Book Concern, 1880), p. 100.}\]
battlefield receiving heroic battlewounds, while the captives of Andersonville were left to starve and die of exposure. The fact that the prisoners of Andersonville were not exchanged prevented Southerners being released from Northern prisons. Since the shortage of manpower in the South was a crucial problem, the Federal soldiers as prisoners had been instrumental in the speedy termination of the war. This was a point that ex-prisoners wanted to have appreciated by the public. Then along with telling their adventure stories was the desire to leave a legacy for the coming generations of this great struggle. It was important to them that the following generations understand the price paid for the maintenance of the United States.

However, not all the reasons behind this post-Civil War literature were harmless or for positive reasons. The fires of sectionalism were still in sight and the realization of normalcy returning was a dream. Samuel Boggs was unable to overcome his prejudices against the ex-Confederates, "It is but natural that I have a kindlier feeling for the men who saved my house from the flames than I could have for those who applied the torch." The call issued from many a narrative was one for revenge. This vengeance was not to be levied against the masses of the South who most Northerners considered poor, misguided souls, but the leaders who conspired

39Boggs, Eighteen Months, p. 74.
40Ibid., p. 82.
to make Andersonville the death trap it was. The hope of many authors was for their narratives to help achieve this goal of revenge, as was stated by A. C. Roach, "trusting that whatever influence it may exercise will aid in bringing the guilty leaders of treason to just punishment, for their enormous crimes against humanity." 41 Captain Wirz's conviction and execution had not satisfied the desire for revenge in the North. Captain Wirz was considered but a "willing tool" in the hands of those in higher command who had devised the evil schemes. The outrage arose not because the individuals were rebels, but because of their inhuman treatment of prisoners. 42 While some demanded action immediately, others were content that the Lord was prepared to meet these wicked men in Heaven. It was their fondest belief that the cries of the thousands dead at Andersonville would be heard by God and vengeance would be attained for the martyred dead. 43

Still some were not to be satisfied with the punishment of the leader alone. These prisoners were against restoring the rights of the South held before the war, especially when they included provisions such as prohibiting the Negro from voting. The battle had won principles which were not to be handed back as the glory of the war faded. Warren Goss demanded

42 Ransom, Diary, pp. 246-247.
43 Kellogg, Life and Death, p. 280.
"In the future the South...must stand condemned by the public opinion of the world, until she has done 'works meet for repentance.'" The South must deserve what she received, she must earn her place in the Union, or get nothing at all. The "waving of the bloody shirt" allowed Northern Congressmen to retain control of the legislative branch of the government for several years. These narratives aided the politicians in maintaining war passions at a high level. The tone of these narratives was further enhanced by the political atmosphere of the country during this post-war period.

The last area for exploration into the motives behind these early prisoners' narratives was supplied by the impact of human emotions on individuals. The Civil War was an highly emotion-packed situation as families were split apart and a nation that had formerly been united in building, concentrated on destroying the other half. Andersonville prison added to the intensity of the emotional strain as a soldier was forced to watch his comrade slowly starve to death or disease spread from limb to limb for lack of medical supplies. The men who lived to tell about Andersonville prison perhaps experienced twinges of guilt about the fact that they survived while friends had not.

The result of this guilt was found in narratives which attempted to justify their prison behavior and rationalize the fact that men died all around him without any aid. Warren Goss

Goss, Soldier's Story, p. 100.
seemed to be apologetic about the fact he returned while all that was left of friends and comrades were rows of white crosses in Georgia. He attempted to justify his conduct as well as that of other survivors.

The terrible truth was, that in prison one could not attempt to relieve the misery of others more miserable than himself, without placing himself in greater peril. Was it wonderful that the cries of dying, famished men were unheeded by those who were battling with fate to preserve their own lives?45

The final conclusion of the prisoners was that the fault and sin rested not on the heads of the dying prisoner's comrades, but the inventors of such misery. These horrible conditions had brutalized the prisoners, deadening their finer sensibilities of charity and brotherly love. The survivors of Andersonville wrote their narratives to allow them to rest with a clear conscience, convinced of the sins committed by the Confederacy rather than any by themselves. Even the raiders who preyed upon fellow comrades, robbing and murdering them, were not to be condemned. Their actions were the result of Confederate treatment and had the prisoners been provided with the necessities of life such activities would have never occurred within the stockade.46

Finally, a possible motive was to relieve a sense of shame the result of being a paroled prisoner while at Andersonville. Though writers repeatedly assured their readers of the prisoners'
loyalty, some managed to escape the horrors of the stockade by being paroled to work around the prison site. Yet, when these paroled prisoners arrived north of the Mason-Dixon Line, they were the most vindictive in their denouncing of Wirz and the Confederates who had benefitted them. Henry Davidson who was paroled as a surgeon’s clerk during those disastrous summer months was even instrumental in the arrest of Captain Wirz. It was the conclusion of Herman Braun that “his interference, however, shows the prominent part taken by men, paroled by the Confederates during their captivity, in aiding in the prosecution of the man who had benefitted them.” The concentrated attack on Wirz helped these men to erase the fact that he had favored them during their stay at Andersonville and made them into heroes.

The narratives of Andersonville prison that followed the opposite line of attack, defending rather than denouncing the Confederate officials and their treatment, made rare appearances until the last decade of the century. These narratives were also fewer in number than the sensationalistic pieces of the earlier stage. Herman Braun recounted the most obvious reason for the lateness in relationship to the other accounts was that “in

48 Ibid., p. 57.  
50 Nevins, Bibliography, pp. 185-205.
the North the prevalence of sectional feelings has discouraged such efforts and stories of willful cruelty shown to the prisoners by the Confederates have become traditional, especially upon the strength of official recognition by the conviction of Captain Wirz. 51

These narratives also shared the same basic themes though written by participants with two different roles in the Andersonville tragedy. The first appearances of these accounts were by ex-Confederate officials such R. Randolph Stevenson who was a physician at Andersonville. These men were interested in defending the honor and integrity of the Southern people against the slanderous accounts written by the Federal soldiers. The other accounts written in this vein were by Federal soldiers who felt that the Confederates had been dealt with unfairly in previous narratives by their fellow prisoners.

Among the first subjects of attention was Captain Henry Wirz, the object of the other accounts hate. These writers proposed that Captain Wirz had been unjustly accused for the horrors of Andersonville, instead he was as much a victim of circumstance as the prisoners. Andersonville prison was not established until the closing years of the war, when the fortunes of the Confederacy were already waning. The insufficiency of supplies became a crippling factor and one that could not be remedied because of the Northern blockade and absence of industry for the production of war supplies in the South. 52

51 Braun, Object Lesson, p. 152.
52 Ibid., pp. 142-143.
Wirz's firmness and even severity were a matter of necessity for any person in control of 30,000 men. His objectives, to hold secure his prisoners and provide for their comfort, were accomplished with the best means available. Captain Wirz because he was at the helm of the ship as it was sinking, received the blame.

The question of guilt for the deaths of Andersonville was no longer treated as a closed case against the South. The refusal of the North to exchange prisoners constituted in these writers' minds a just cause for the North to share the blame for Federal soldiers starving to death. When Andersonville was recording its highest death tolls in the summer months of 1864, the Federal government had refused to establish a cartel for the exchange of prisoners. The classic statement issued by General Grant on the matter was that the Union Army could not afford to "exchange skeletons for healthy men." These lives were wasted by the Federal government and these men were not willing to overlook this. The North was also to blame for medicines becoming contrabands, thus cutting off these valuable supplies to the South which could have alleviated the suffering at Andersonville. Plus, the fact that the invading Northern armies especially under General Sherman destroyed everything of possible value to the Confederacy.

54 Stevenson, Southern Side, pp. 135-136.
55 Ibid.
The final point in these writers' eyes was that the South had too much to gain from treating its prisoners of war with humanity to intentionally devise a plan of murder for them. The institution of slavery was a black mark on the South's record in the eyes of many nations of the world. The South was not interested in adding cruelty and inhuman treatment of prisoners to the list, especially when she was hoping for the intervention of France or England on the Confederacy's behalf. 56

The desire for the truth was shared by Andersonville participants writing at any period. The job of the later narratives was considerably greater because of the firm establishment of the Andersonville horror stories. The defense of the conquered rebels was not only a difficult task, but also one that offered little reward when completed. However, this desire to tell the truth had burned over years until it reached a level of intensity that it must be expressed. R. Randolph Stevenson wished to cleanse the name of his fellow citizens of the South when he wrote, "I feel that in compiling this work I am performing a sacred duty in vindicating the memory of fallen heroes, as well as erasing a dark stain most unjustly cast upon the character of the Southern people." 57

Another consideration of these late writers was to help

56 Braun, Object Lesson, pp. 149-150.
57 Stevenson, Southern Side, pp. 5-6.
mend the sectional lines that were still etched into the surface of the United States. The narratives of this nature were calling upon the North to be honest and admit the facts of the prison controversy, that an exchange of prisoners would have prevented many untimely deaths. These books were written in hope of providing aid to conquer this sectional bitterness.58

One author proposed that an excellent gesture of friendship toward the South would be to grant the Confederate soldiers pensions. The Southern taxpayers contributed toward the pension appropriations, so a law that granted pensions to the mistaken brother, the Confederate soldier, would have seemed only fair.59

The roots of favoritism were found by Herman Braun in the Civil War and he wished to expose them. His book, entitled Andersonville, An Object Lesson in Protection, had as its focal point destroying the triumph of the propertied and wealthy classes over the masses. He traced the practices of protecting the rights of the upper class to when the North adopted the system of bounties which allowed the wealthy to escape the fortunes of a soldier's life. However, the discrimination between the upper class and the general populace had not stopped, but had expanded with subsequent legislation, such as payment of soldiers in depreciated currency.60

58 Page, True Story, p. 248.
59 Ibid., p. 246.
60 Braun, Object Lesson, p. 161.
protection of the wealthy was destroying the faith of the people in free institutions and the Federal government needed to take immediate steps to remedy it.  

Finally, there were personal considerations behind these accounts being written, especially those written by ex-Con­federates who had served as prison officials. R. Randolph Stevenson who was in charge of the hospitals in Andersonville prison, wrote his narrative with the glory of the South in mind, but an equally powerful motive was defending his own name. He had been accused of embezzlement of hospital funds, as well as listed as a conspirator at Wirz's trial. His account of the happenings at Andersonville also provided an excellent opportunity for giving an account of the funds received and how they were spent.  

James Madison Page wrote his account for the personal wish of defending a friend, Henry Wirz. In every Andersonville account the ultimate reasons behind the writing and publishing of their experience were undoubtedly as individualized as the people were themselves.

The passions that surrounded the question of the treatment of prisoners forced the historian, James Ford Rhodes, to write in 1920, "For arriving at the truth about treatment of the prisoners of war...the time has come when this subject should be considered with an even mind." He also accounted

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61Ibid., p. 163.
62Stevenson, Southern Side, p. 98.
63Rhodes, History, V, 483.
for the lack of objectivity in prison literature with the statement,

Had the war ended with the year 1863, the treatment of prisoners North and South could have been considered dispassionately with a substantial agreement in the conclusions of candid inquirers. To the refusal to exchange prisoners and to threatened retaliation by the North and to Andersonville at the South are due for the most part the bitterness which has been infused into this controversy.64

Unfortunately the war was not ended in 1863 and Andersonville almost since its conception was destined to become the center of controversy. The ex-prisoners who described the prison conditions at the same time, perhaps even living side by side, were able to draw totally different conclusions from their experiences. The story of what actually happened at Andersonville was never written by the individuals involved because woven between facts was always a maze of emotions, bitterness, prejudice, even compassion, to cloud the picture.

64 Ibid., p. 491.
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