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# ***THE ALEXANDRIA CHRONICLE***



*Winter 1999/2000 Vol. VII, No. 4*

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## ***The Washington' and Prince Street Military Prisons -- Alexandria's Andersonville??***

by T. Michael Miller

Erected in 1864, the prison at Andersonville, Georgia acquired the reputation of being one of the Civil War's most notorious camps. During its 15 month operation almost 13,000 Union inmates died there from exposure, malnutrition and disease. A shortage of provisions, the U.S. Government's suspension of the prisoner exchange program and a burgeoning Union prison population combined to make conditions at Andersonville intolerable. Indeed, after the war Capt. Henry Wirz, the prison's commandant, was tried for crimes against humanity and subsequently

hanged. Yet, similar conditions existed in Northern prisons which housed captured Confederates in Elmira, New York; Johnson's Island, Illinois; and Ft. Delaware. Senator Hill, of Georgia, in a speech given in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1876, noted that "There were sufferings in all prisons and brutalities perpetrated in this as in other wars, but the proofs furnished by the evidence of [Union] General Benjamin Butler, by the orders of Federal military officers, by the orders and communications of General Grant, and by the reports of Secretary [of War] Stanton, all of which are of

record, fix the responsibility of this uncivilized mode of war upon the Federal administration. Secretary Stanton's report of July 19, 1866, shows that 26,246 Confederate soldiers died in Northern prisons, and 25,576 Union soldiers died in Southern prisons. Twelve per cent of the Confederate prisoners who fell into Northern captivity died notwithstanding all the facilities for receiving food, clothing, medicines and healthful conditions which the United States unquestionably possessed, while in absence of these requisites on the part of the Confederacy the astonishing fact appears that less than nine per cent of the Union soldiers in Southern hands died in prisons."<sup>3</sup>

What about Alexandria? On May 24, 1861, the city was invaded by 2,100 Union troops and Alexandria soon became a major logistical supply center for federal forces as public halls, hotels and private homes were illegally seized and converted into military hospitals, prisons and barracks.

Writing in the October 1987 issue of Northern Virginia Heritage<sup>4</sup> the author published "Prison Life in Alexandria, Virginia," an article which identified five prisons sites within the confines of the old seaport town. These included the Slave Pen Guard House at 1315 Duke Street; the Odd Fellows Hall, 218 North Columbus Street; the Alexandria Jail on the 400 block of N. St. Asaph Street; the Prince St. Military Prison, on the S.E. corner of Prince and Fairfax Street and the Washington St. Military Prison at 515 N. Washington Street. The records of

these facilities and their mode of operation had come to light with the acquisition of the official papers and reports of Capt. R.D. Pettit, inspector of Alexandria prisons, 1864-1865.<sup>5</sup>

Originally Pettit had enlisted in federal service as a sergeant with the First New York Volunteers in 1846. During the Civil War he later served with Company F, 12th Regiment Volunteer Reserve Corps. On July 20, 1864, H.H. Wells, Lt. Col. and Provost General of the Defenses South of the Potomac, issued special order No. 22 which appointed Capt. Pettit inspector of prisons in Alexandria. This order further specified that Pettit was to report to headquarters:

each three days the condition and discipline of prisoners confined; the condition and security of the prisons; the manner of preparing and issuing rations to the prisoners; the condition of the fund from savings of rations; the efficiency and discipline of the guard; the books and all pertaining to the prisons.

From a survey of Pettit's files, it was possible to partially reconstruct how the prison system functioned in Alexandria. Generally,

the status of Alexandria prisons appeared to have been less deleterious than the condition of Northern prisons such as Elmira,

Johnson's Island and Camp Douglas. Medically, the number of Confederate and civilian prisoners sent to hospitals in Alexandria fluctuated between four and five percent of the total prison

foodstuffs were plentiful in the North.  
...<sup>6</sup>

Although prisons in Alexandria were occasionally overcrowded, it was



Erected in 1847, the Mt. Vernon Cotton Factory Building is situated on the 500 block of N. Washington St. From 1918 to the mid-1920s, a spark plug factory occupied the site.

population. No doubt, there were no prison paradises in town but Union officials could have provided more nutritious meals than coffee and bread for dinner. They were not hampered by a naval blockade and clothing and

generally thought that the inmates were treated humanely. This supposition has been challenged by documents recently discovered at the National Archives. Pettit's role as Superintendent of Prisons came under

severe scrutiny when he was court martialed and tried for brutalizing prisoners under his care at the Washington and Prince Street prisons in November 1865. Indeed, rumors of irregularities in the treatment of internees in Alexandria had begun to circulate in the halls of Congress.

Capt. Pettit's court martial hearing convened at Alexandria, Virginia on November 14, 1865. "Pursuant to Special Orders, No. 593, War Department, Adjutant General's Office dated November 9, 1865, Brevet Major-General George S. Green, U.S. Volunteers, was appointed President."<sup>7</sup> Capt. Pettit was charged with the following three articles of misconduct. Namely:

Specifications 1 -- In this; that he, Captain R.D. Pettit, Company F, 12th Regiment, Veteran Reserve Corps, while acting as Inspector and Superintendent of Military Prisons in Alexandria, Virginia, having, on or about the 25th day of October 1864 ordered a prisoner, name unknown, then confined in the Washington Street Prison, Alexandria, Virginia, to be punished by being handcuffed with the hands behind his back and tied up by means of a rope and chain, one end of which rope and chain was fastened to said handcuffs, and the other

attached to a beam about 10 feet above the floor, did after said order had been executed, take hold of said rope and chain and draw said rope and chain up so far that the breast of said prisoner was brought within about 20 inches of the floor; and while said prisoner was in this position, upon his denying that he belonged to any regiment in the service of the United States, he, the said Pettit did cruelly and inhumanly kick said prisoner violently in the face, causing his blood to spurt upon the floor saying at the same time 'You are a lying son of a bitch.' This at the Washington Street Prison, Military Prison, on or about 25th day of October 1864.

Specification 2nd -- In this: that he, Capt. R.D. Pettit, Company F, 12th Regiment, Veteran Reserve Corps, while acting as Inspector and Superintendent of Military Prisons in Alexandria, Virginia, on or about the 15th day of November 1864, for the purpose of extorting from Joseph Smith, alias Sweet, then a prisoner in the Prince Street Military Prison, Alexandria, Virginia, a

confession that he was a deserter from the service of the United States did punish Smith and cause him to be punished in a cruel and inhuman manner by directing and causing that said Smith be handcuffed with his hands behind his back, and tied up by means of a rope and chain, one end of which rope and chain was fastened to said handcuffs, and the other end attached to a beam about ten feet above the floor, thereby drawing said Smith, alias Sweet, up, and did keep said Smith, alias Sweet, twelve hours, and did repeat said punishment four or five times, keeping said Smith, alias Sweet, so tied up for periods varying from six to eight hours, until said Smith, alias Sweet stated that he belonged to a regiment in the military service of the United States. This at Prince Street Military Prison, Alexandria, Virginia, on or about the 15th day of November, 1864.

Specification 3 -- In this; that he, Capt. R.D. Pettit, Company F, 12 Regiment, Veteran Reserve Corps, while acting as Inspector and Superintendent of

Military Prisons in Alexandria, Virginia, on or about the 23rd day of March, 1865, did, without authority, unlawfully and by force and violence, arrest and confine and cause to be confined in the Alexandria Jail, corner of Princess and St. Asaph street, in Alexandria, one Thomas Cumber, a citizen of Alexandria, and not a soldier in the United States service, upon a charge of desertion from said service, and while so confined, beat, abused and wounded said Cumber, breaking his nose, and causing great pain, suffering and insensibility. This at Alexandria, Virginia, on or about the 23d day of March, 1865."

To which charges and specifications the accused, Capt. R.D. Pettit, 12th Regiment, Veteran Reserve Corps, pleaded "NOT GUILTY."

**TRIAL TESTIMONY:** During the course of the trial several witnesses took the stand including Lt Colonel and Brevet Brigadier General H.H. Wells, Provost Marshall, Defenses South of the Potomac. He testified to the following facts:

I was making an inspection of Washington Street Prison and that in company with General

Augur I found a man in the ante-room of the second or third story tied up by his hands and inquired why the punishment was inflicted. I did not inquire of Capt. Pettit, I think, I am not certain he was there but some of the officers who had immediate command of the prison.

The reason assigned for that man's punishment was that he had kicked out the eye of a prisoner. I am not quite certain of that, it was certainly some disturbance in the prison.

More so than any collection of men, I ever saw in my life, and for that reason, there were hundreds of professional thugs, pickpockets, robbers and murderers there. Men of the worst possible description who made it known that had been their business.

[And],...complaints were [also] made to me of prisoners assaulting each other. An attempt was made to fire the [Washington Street] Prison when it held 1,400 men.

**[Prosecution Question:]**  
Were there not at various

times during the period in which Pettit was inspector of Prisons complaints of brutal treatment against prisoners which reached you?

**General Wells:** Yes -- frequent complaint -- No.

I did not find the complaints sustained in any case that I personally investigated. Did the investigators show the complaints to the guards? They did in my judgment.

**Prosecution Witness-- D.W.C. James,** Captain of Pennsylvania Volunteers, Co. C, Second Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry.

[He] "was detailed to take command of the Washington Street Prison on September 12, 1864 and remained in that capacity until November 10th. His duty -- commanding officer of the prison -- Pettit was Superintendent and Inspector of Prisons..."

"A number of prisoners were tied up by order of Capt. Pettit. 'Tell us about the case.' I think it was about the 25th of October 1864. I had visited the wards of the prison with Capt. Pettit. ...We had been up to the upper wards and as we

came down, I recollect that Sergt. Belnap was on duty in that ward, or rather the vestibule ward which was partitioned off containing prisoners. Capt. Pettit asked the Sergt. 'If that was the way he tied up prisoners?' There was a man tied up there handcuffed with his hands behind him, but not in a very uncomfortable position. He was confined with his hands behind him and a chain attached to a beam above. Capt. Pettit asked the Sergt if that was the way he obeyed orders? The Sergt said 'he supposed he had done it right.' Capt. Pettit then asked the Sergt. for the keys of the handcuffs. The handcuffs were locked on the wrist and then there was a chain brought up to the beam above."

"The Sergt. gave him the keys and he [Pettit] unlocked the chain and drew the man up higher. Capt. Pettit made some remark that the man should own up to what regiment he belonged."

"The Prisoner said, 'Capt. so help me God, I do not belong to any regiment.' Captain Pettit then kicked him in the face and said

he was a liar and voiced some expression that he was a liar or a damned liar."

Capt. D.W. James testified: "I saw the blood come on the floor. He was quite an old man. He was tied to a beam that was put across on a joist or a scantling, perhaps 4 inches square, placed up there and fastened."

During the cross-examination period the defense elicited testimony that there were "feelings against Pettit for having some of his men sent to the Slave Pen and court martialed."

It was said that "Capt. James had a great dislike for Capt. Pettit...and Pettit supposedly had a detective follow James for trying to steal from the prison. James sent a letter describing conditions at the prison to Mr. Scofoud, his member from Congress. He also visited Mr. Gooch of Massachusetts, and General Baker about conditions of prisons in Alexandria."

Capt. James later admitted to the Court panel that he had not informed military authorities in Alexandria about the deplorable prison conditions. About November 10, 1864, James was subsequently relieved from duty by Col. Wells, but continued guarding the prison.

**Testimony of Hiram P. Belnap, Youngsville, Warren Co., Pennsylvania, of Pennsylvania volunteers.**

"On duty in Alexandria in 1863 in a battery stationed in the city limits...transferred to Washington Street prison 2 Sept. 1864; Pettit sent for Belnap one morning to go into the office. He had a man there, quite an old man and he told me to take him and tie him up -- I took him up into the hall of the 2nd ward and tied the man up. I put handcuffs on his hands, handcuffed his hands behind his back and fastened the handcuffs to a chain behind his back and drew him up." The chain was fastened to a rod that went across the room.

**Belnap continued** "...The blood flew out of his mouth and I suppose he (Pettit) hit him somewhere right in the mouth...probably a man 40 years old rather thick set, gray hair -- he was kept tied up until the next morning -- 20 hours. Ward masters set a bucket for him to stand on so it did not hurt his arms so bad." Belnap was relieved from duty at the prison on June 10."

**Capt. Pettit** countered by saying - "There were 8,500 deserters court martialed during my connection with the prisons at Alexandria and not a single act of injustice was committed." Pettit had managed Prince St. Military Prison until 20 July 1864 when he was then made Superintendent of all prisons in Alexandria.

**Dr. William Gibson**, Number 10 South Patrick Street, then addressed the Court concerning the Second specification filed against Capt. Pettit. "In his statement Dr. Gibson recounted that in the spring of 1865, he had paid a professional visit to Thomas Cumber,

a six year resident of Alexandria who lived in a house at the intersection of Princess and St. Asaph Streets." Cumber's "face was beaten and blackened and his nose was broken. There was also a fracture of the nasal bones."

Cumber who knew Pettit well stated:

I do not know anything good about him. He arrested me -- drew a pistol on me on my pavement in front of my piazza where I have been residing for 6 years keeping a restaurant. I do not know whether it was the 3rd or 23 of March 1865. I do not exactly remember the date. He said he knew I was a deserter and he called me a 'son of a bitch' and said he would beat it out of me and wanted to know what regiment I belonged to. He then called the corporal of the guard to put me inside the jail. He struck me with his fist and then he finished me off with his revolver, the last blow he struck me. He struck me right between the eyes and broke my nose. He said he would give me a trial and not be in any hurry about it. I bled considerably. The rest of the prisoners in the jail

washed it off and threw water over me and brought me to my senses. There is only one street between my house and the jail. He struck me about a dozen times with his fists.<sup>8</sup>

The final prosecution witness against Capt. Pettit was Sergt. Michael Murray,<sup>9</sup> who had served at the Prince Street Prison from May 1864 until May 1865.

His testimony focused on Capt. Pettit's treatment of Caleb Sweet, an internee at the Prince Street prison. Murray stated:

"I saw him tied up several times and saw Capt. Pettit hit him. First time came about July 1864. Pettit asked him if he had been a soldier and he said he had not. Then the Capt. struck him and ordered that he be tied up. He struck him in the face. Pettit said that he would have to own up -- he knew he was a soldier."

"He [Sweet] was handcuffed with his hands behind his back. He might have been tied up 3 or 4 hours, the next time 7 or 8 hours. The last time 11 or 12 hours."

"The last time I saw him taken down he was hardly

able to speak and then he owned up to being a soldier. It seems as if he had lost the use of his speech and limbs."

"Sweet might have been tied up 6 or 7 times during which time he was struck in the mouth at the Prince Street prison in the presence of other soldiers. It was severe punishment and cruel."

In the summary arguments before the Court, the defense stated that "Brutality and cruelty parallel to the conduct of Capt. Wirz at Andersonville is being charged to have been committed almost within the shadow of the Department of War -- Yet there appears to be a "great cry & little wool." [wool -- evidence]

**Judge Advocate H.B. Burnham** reiterated that

"The crimes committed in the Alexandria's prisons came up to the capital in such a thundering and continued tones that the Government could not shut its eyes and close its ears to the enormities of which it has presented to you but a few examples."

After deliberations the Court handed down the findings:

"Of the 1st Specification, "Guilty," excepting of the words 'so far

that the breast of said prisoner was brought within twenty inches of the floor,' and of the words so excepted, where they occur in said specification, do find the accused "Not Guilty."

Of the 2d Specification, "Guilty," except the words 'Joseph Smith, alias Sweet,' and substituting therefore the name of 'Caleb Sweet, alias Smith,' and of the words so excepted "Not Guilty."

Of the 3d Specification, "Guilty," excepting the words 'upon a charge of desertion from said service, and while so confined,' and of the words so excepted "Not Guilty."

"Of the Charge, "Guilty."

"And the Court doth therefore sentence him, Capt. R.D. Pettit, 12th Vol. Reserve Corps to be dismissed from the service of the United States on November 26, 1865."

"The findings of the Court in the foregoing case of Captain R.D. Pettit, 12th Regiment Veteran Reserve Corps, under the Charge, and its first and second Specifications are approved and the finding under its third Specification is disapproved."

"The proceedings and sentence are approved. Captain Pettit ceases to be an officer in the service of the United States from this date."

"By Order of the Secretary of War: E.D. Townsend, Assistant Adjutant General." General Court Martial Orders, No. 645--War Department, Adjutant General's Office,

Washington, December 13, 1865.

If Capt. Pettit treated his fellow Union servicemen with such cruelty and contempt, how did captured Confederates fare in Alexandria prisons? It is unlikely that federal officials would have placed much credence in the testimony of former Confederate soldiers just seven months after the end of a bitter Civil War. Perhaps, Pettit's comments in a letter to his wife may provide a clue as to how he treated the 1,400 Southern soldiers housed in the fetid Washington Street prison:

"June 5, 1865 -- Large numbers of the rebels have returned here and taken the oath--Some of them are minus legs, arms, etc.--for my part I wish it was their heads they lost for in truth I do not put much faith in their oaths. The city is full of troops and stragglers and some excesses have been committed..."<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Pettit admitted in another letter that after President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated several Alexandrians were killed for openly commenting about the tragedy:

Today has been one of gloom. Every man who is for the Union looks gloomy and feels gloomy--Nay more than that--our savage blood has been shed in Alexandria today and we are likely to have a lively time tonight. The city commenced this morning with such

language as this 'I am glad' 'good news' 'hope he is in Hell' 'ought to have been killed long ago.' The consequences of which was some lost their lives, I have about 20 in prison. We do not stand upon ceremony...<sup>11</sup>

In reviewing the trial, it is noteworthy that Federal officers who served with Capt. Pettit returned to Alexandria to see that JUSTICE was served.

Perhaps, it would have been awkward, if not hypocritical, for Union authorities to indict and try Capt. Henry Wirz, the commandant of Andersonville, for crimes against humanity, when in fact Capt. R.D. Pettit had also mistreated federal prisoners almost within the shadow of the U.S. Capitol and White House.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, it is ironic that Capt. Pettit was dismissed from federal service 16 days after Capt. Henry Wirz was hanged in the yard of the Old Capitol prison on November 10, 1865.

**Happenings from the Pages of the  
Alexandria Gazette--**  
compiled by T. M. Miller

**U.S. Federal Troops Attack African Americans at King and S. St. Asaph Street**--Last night, about eight o'clock, a party of Negro men, who were disorderly in front of the Theatre, were dispersed by officer Johnson. -- About a half an hour afterward they congregated in increased numbers at

the intersection of King and St. Asaph Streets, armed with bayonets, concealed in their coat sleeves, when they attacked and severely beat an Irishman. The facts were reported to the Provost Marshal, who immediately sent a detachment of men to the scene of the disturbance. The rioters seeing the approach of the troops broke and fled in the direction of the Second Presbyterian Church. They were fired into by the guard, but we believe no one was injured.--Several were caught and carried to the Military prison. [AG: 10/20/1865]

**"Drunk at the Wheel"** -- A Fairfaxian, while under the influence of liquor yesterday evening, ran his horse on the sidewalk on upper King Street and overturned his carriage in which he and his niece were seated. Both were bruised, but neither was much hurt, though at first it was thought that the man was fatally injured. The accident caused much excitement in the neighborhood. [AG: 10/4/1893]

**The Tramp Nuisance.** The number of tramps which infest the city is larger than for many years, and they make their presence known to house wives in suppliant tones very often. They generally apply at houses for food, etc., when they know the men folks are absent, and in some instances become menacing. Occasionally the itinerants are seen in yards and then they considerably alarm females. Early last night while a gentleman residing on Lee Street was eating his supper a strange man climbed a neighboring fence into his yard. The proprietor of the house lost no time in running the

marauder out. [AG: 11/8/1893]

## Biography--

**John Andrew Seaton--**  
Alexandria's first African American member of the Board of Aldermen, Routts, Fauquier Co., March 14, 1898 - John Andrew Seaton, one of the most prominent colored men of Virginia and New York, is critically ill at his farm residence, near this place. Dr. Campbell, his attending physician, states that his patient has a slight chance of recovery, that the present mild weather is favorable, but, with colder weather, he fears serious results. His patient is prostrated in bed and only is kept alive by a nourishing diet.

The once giant frame of John A. Seaton has wasted away to a mere skeleton and he lies patiently with a full assurance of saving grace, ready to meet his God, when he is summoned.

John A. Seaton was born in the city of Alexandria, 12th of November, 61 years ago (1837). He was reared in the neighborhood of Washington and Franklin streets, then known as "Seatonville."

He learned the carpenter's trade under his late brother, the well-known George L. Seaton.

At the outbreak of the war he enlisted in the quartermaster's department at Alexandria and later in the colored union troops that were organized for the protection of Alexandria and Washington. He was with the federals at City Point, and

became one of the recognized leaders of the colored people of Virginia at the close of the war.

When the late Hon. John F. Lewis entered the U.S. Senate from Virginia he secured the appointment of John A. Seaton in the Treasury Department, and then later on the police force of the U.S. Capitol.

The giant form of John Seaton, who was symmetrically built from head to foot, standing 6 feet 6 inches, weighing 275 pounds, dressed in the uniform of a U.S. officer was one of the central figures of observance to the hundreds who visited the U.S. Senate wing and rotunda, which he daily guarded. While serving in the latter position he was elected Alderman from the Fourth ward in the Alexandria City Council, being the first colored man in the State to be so honored. He served with credit and held the esteem and confidence of the community. He was chosen the chairman of the republican party and received the republican nomination for Congress from the 8th district, but declined the honor. At that time Alderman Seaton led the colored people. Colored men were awarded places of honor and trust in party circles and they secured federal appointments.

At the death of Charles Sumner (Senator from Massachusetts), Alderman Seaton was detailed by the Senate officials as one of the guard of honor to accompany his remains from Washington to Boston.

Upon his return to Washington

he was offered, and accepted, a position as a police guard of the big Equitable Assurance Company, of New York City. Such was the enormous size and splendid physique of Seaton when he entered the big building at 120 Broadway that he attracted the attention of the reporters of the big metropolitan dailies, and each paper contained portraits and pen sketches of the biggest and tallest man in the big city of New York. Seaton, coming from the old stock of Virginia colored people and with retiring and affable manners ... soon made friends in New York and served with credit in the employ of the big Equitable Company for over twenty-five years. Two years ago his health began to fail and he had to be relieved from his duties in the Equitable and come south.

He is a member of Universal Lodge, No. 1, A.F. & A.M., of Alexandria, Va., Lieutenant Commander of Fletcher Consistory, Scottish Rite Masonry, and a Noble of Magnus Temple, of the Mystic Shrine, of Alexandria, Va. He is a member of Mount Olivet Baptist Church, New York city. [AG: March 16, 1898]

John Seaton died in 1898 and was interred on his farm in Fauquier County, Virginia.

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**Editor:** T. Michael Miller

**Editorial Committee:**

James H. Johnson

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## ENDNOTES: Washington & Prince Street Prisons

1. The largest and most infamous prison in Alexandria was housed in a four story cotton factory. Established in 1847 by a group of Alexandria businessmen, this factory employed 47 men and 88 women, operated 120 looms, and produced over \$100,000 worth of brown sheeting by 1860.

Seized around 1863, this 61 x 100 foot structure was white-washed and a fence erected around its outer perimeter. A temporary guard barracks was constructed to the south of the main factory. The prison population at the cotton factory varied from 1,400 in October 1864 to 200 in May 1865. As a result of overcrowding, there were many escape attempts. The most serious of these occurred on November 10, 1864. Receiving a tip from an informer Capt. R.P. Crawford, the officer in charge, notified Lt. Col. H.H. Wells, the provost Marshal, of the following circumstances:

...My informant is known by officers connected with his past to be a perfectly reliable man. The prisoners confined in the 4th story of the aforesaid prison have concocted a scheme having for its object nothing less than the burning of the building in which they are confined. The following is the modus operandi. By means of a wooden ventilation passing from base to summit through every room of the building the plotters have gained access to the upper most story where is stored, machinery, belting and refuses of the cotton factory. It is proposed to fire this stuff and during the attendant confusion of the guards to effect their escape by lowering themselves from the window of their room to the ground by means of belting now secreted under the sink in the 4th story room in which the prisoners are now confined. It is proposed to consummate this scheme tonight and I respectfully call to your attention the statement of this man, which statement I have no reason to believe other than truthful. [Pettit papers]

Needless to say this escape attempt was foiled. This was not always the case however. From August to October 1864, 18 Confederate prisoners escaped from this facility.

Besides being overcrowded the sanitary facilities at the Washington Street prison left much to be desired:

Wards No. 1,2,3, & 4 are not clean and the privies attached are very filthy, the men are allowed to shit upon the floors and cook coffee by the

gas jets. I find many of the wooden bars gone from the windows and other damage done, for which there can be no good reason given, the yards and premises generally are filthy, the men having been allowed to urinate in the commons and against the building.

By May 1865 most of the Confederates had been removed and the prison was converted into a barracks for convalescent and Union stragglers. It closed soon afterward.

2. **Prince Street Military Prison:** One of the more unusual prisons in Alexandria was situated at the southeast corner of Prince and South Fairfax Street. Its inhabitants were federal soldiers who had been charged with desertion. This three story, elongated structure, was erected by John Ricketts, owner of Cameron Mills in Fairfax County. Purchased by James Green in 1835, he enlarged the edifice after a fire had burned it in 1835. Green later established a successful furniture factory there. Federal authorities confiscated the building on May 18, 1864, refitted it, and placed it in operation by the 25th of the month. From May until July 1864 a total of 1,152 soldiers were confined at Prince Street. The average number incarcerated for June was 509 and 432 in July. Fifteen men were reported sick for the last 10 days in July and five sent to a hospital. During the interval covered by this report one prisoner was shot in the shoulder for violating the regulations of the prison and another federal deserter jumped from the third floor...and was so much injured that he had to be taken to a hospital on a stretcher.

Security at the prison was maintained by 106 guards. In October 1864 the facility was listed

in fair condition, being kept neatly white washed and clean. Prisoners are under good discipline, clean and comfortable--having been supplied with clothing and blankets.

Significantly many of the court martial records for this facility have survived. Military law specified that each soldier be arraigned, specifically charged, pleaded and then sentenced. ["Papers of Capt. R.D. Pettit" -- Alexandria Library, Lloyd House]

3. George Evans, editor, "The Inhumanities of War" in The Confederate Military History (North Carolina: Broadfoot Press, reprint 1987), Vol. I, Chapter XX.

4. T. Michael Miller, "Prison Life in Civil War Alexandria" in Northern Virginia Heritage (October, 1987), Vol. IX, No. 3.

5. Papers of Capt. R.D. Pettit, Inspector of Prisons in Alexandria, Va., 1864-1865. Donated by Mrs. DeAnn D. Rowe, Alexandria Library, Lloyd House. Hereafter referred to as Papers of Capt. R.D. Pettit.

6. Ibid., p. 13.

7. All testimony is taken from U.S. Court Martial Records--1865, Letter "P" at the National Archives: M-1105.

The jury for the trial was composed of Brig. General Henry Prince, U.S. Volunteer; Brev. Major General George S. Greene, U.S.; Brig. General J.A. Hoskins, U.S.V.; Brev. Brig. General F.H. Collier, Col. 139th Pennsylvania Vols.; Brev. Brig. General D.B. McKibben, Col. 214th Pennsylvania Vols.; Col. John Mansfield, 122 Regiment Veterans Reserve Corps; Lt. Col. Carlisle Boyd, 14 Regiment, V.R.C.; Major H.B. Burnham--Judge Advocate of the Court; A.S. Fuller, Esq. -- Counsel for Pettit

8. Cumber, the proprietor of a restaurant in Alexandria for three years, had previously been arrested for selling whiskey to soldiers.

9. Murray worked as a clerk in the prison office -- Every morning he forwarded a report on Alexandria prisons to Col. Wells for review.

10. "Letters and papers of Capt. R.D. Pettit," op. cit.

11. "Letters and papers of Capt. R.D. Pettit," op. cit., p. 13.

12. See also: Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General -- Court Martials -- 1809-1894 -- National Archives file: 3143.



201 SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET  
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