

Prisoners-As-Shields and Other Horrors of War as Experienced by James A. Penfield Part III

MARINE HOSPITAL, CHARLESTON

A HALF-DOZEN PRISON FACILITIES WERE LOCATED IN CHARLESTON. ALL PRISONERS WERE INITIALLY TAKEN TO CITY JAIL AND FROM THERE MOVED TO VARIOUS OTHER PARTS OF THE CITY.

BY PATRICIA A. KAUFMANN

On August 10, James A. Penfield, in his writings, notes that 173 men were moved to Work House Prison in Charleston, although 400 were initially supposed to go. On August 13, there were rumors of moving to nearby Roper Hospital (Figure 50) and finally on August 16, he states that those officers who sign a parole (promise not to escape) may go to either Roper or Marine Hospital, where conditions were preferable to the City Jail. They leave the jail that day. On August 17, he writes with a clear sense of relief, *“Slept on the Piazza of Marine Hospital. Very comfortable, much [better] than in the Sand of the Jail Yard-The Hospital is Dirty, rubbish scattered all over it.”*



Union officers being held in one of the many prisons located in Charleston, S.C. In this case, Castle Pinckney.



Marine Hospital was located at 20 Franklin Street between Magazine and Queen Streets around the corner from Roper Hospital. It was built 1831-33 as a public facility for the treatment of sick and disabled merchant seamen of both U.S. and foreign ships. The building was designed by renowned architect and Charleston native Robert Mills, perhaps most celebrated for designing the Washington Monument, although his classical contributions to the architecture of the United States are many. After the war, Marine Hospital served as a school for Negro children and later as an orphanage. In 1939, the Housing Authority of Charleston purchased the building for administrative offices, a purpose it still serves today. Figure 51 shows a 1934 view of Marine Hospital. The photo is from the Historic American Buildings Survey, a program of the National Park Service.

There appeared to be communication between prisoners in the various prisons within Charleston, although it was forbidden and guards were put in place to prevent it. The prisoners appear to have been shuffled from prison to prison, perhaps because of health complaints. Marine Hospital was not used as a hospital, while Roper Hospital was used for treating patients. Penfield notes the names of those sent or received from other Charleston prisons.

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Figure 52. Prisoner cover franked with CSA 11 to Penfield at Macon, Georgia, but he was already at Marine Hospital in Charleston when this was posted.

Iron Dale July 2. 9. 1864

My very dear brother,

You may rest assured, we were all delighted to be able to hear from you once more, after waiting, so long in suspense as to your whereabouts. Your letter to me from Danville Va, came to me last eve. Mr. Allen, Dr. and Scott, were received here the 2d, and we were so glad to hear you were then well & still hope you are blessed with good health, still it hardly seems as though you could be. I do hope you will soon be permitted, to come home & to stay with us. I have persisted in staying here that you might have a pleasant home when you should be allowed to come. I think you must need to be strengthened up & recruited by some time, so long a prisoner, more than year. Father is at home now has been

Figure 53. Letter from Jim's sister, Carrie, enclosed in Figure 52 cover.

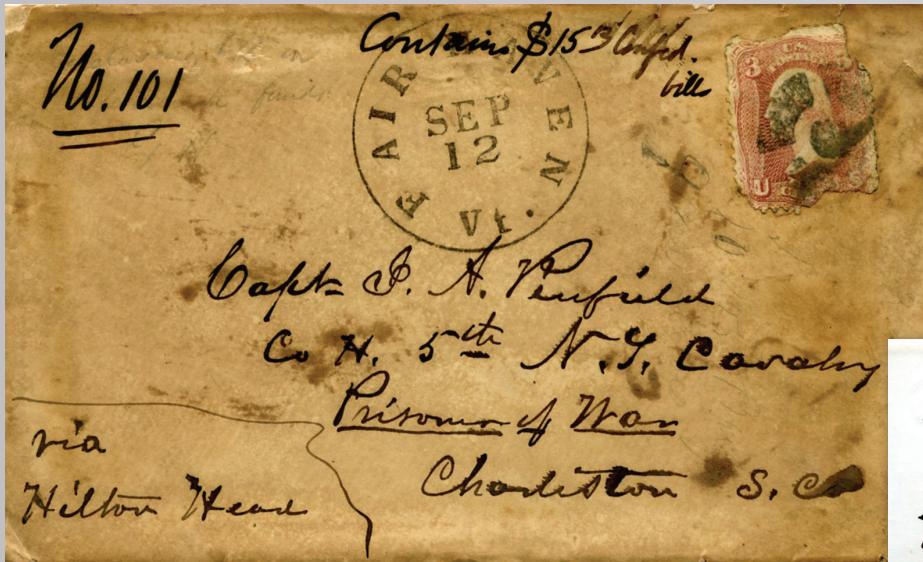


Figure 54. Prisoner-of-war cover bearing stamps of both U.S. and Confederacy, addressed to Penfield while confined to Marine Hospital, Charleston.

Fairham 9th Sept 10. 1864

Dear Brother - J. A. Penfield

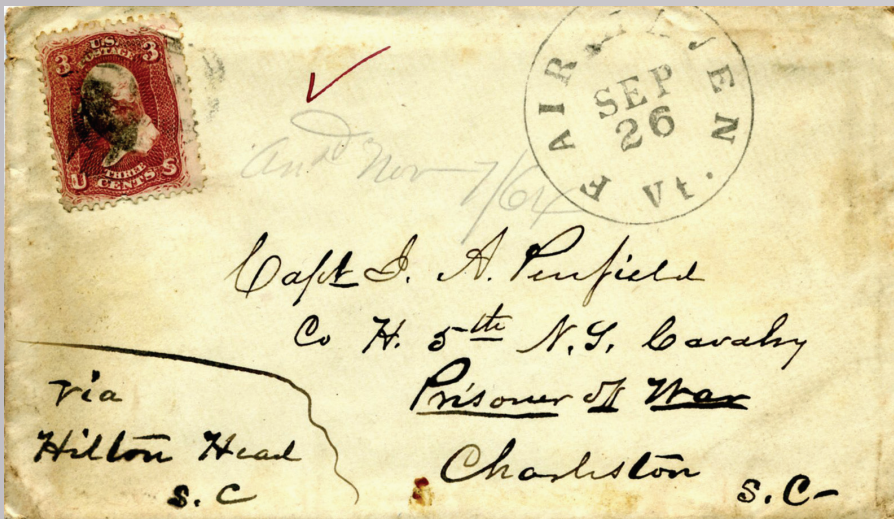
Father has just come home from Clamson Springs and has brought fifteen dollars of Confederate funds which Henry obtained from some of our former soldiers. I will enclose it to you, hoping it will reach you and do you much good, if you have not been exchanged before it can go so far - I sent a box for you two days ago and at the same time sent \$20 in bank bills to Mr. Foster requesting him to exchange it for gold or Confed funds and send it to you. Father is in good health. He says he gained 12 lbs in the 12 days he was at Clamson. He says Henry is improving on Col McLaughlin's Mountain and Spring Water.

We are all well and all send you love home with a portion extra from "May" & "James Henry".

Yours with much sympathy & love
W. S. Nichols

Figure 55. Letter to Penfield from his brother-in-law who was sending him Confederate funds.

Figure 56. September 26 [1864] cover to Marine Hospital, Charleston



The cover and first page of a 3-page letter are shown in Figures 52 and 53. The cover is franked with a Confederate 10¢ blue, type II, tied by a Richmond, Virginia, August 17 [1864] circular date stamp and addressed to "Capt. James A. Penfield, Prisoner of War, Macon, Georgia." It is from his sister, Carrie K. Spencer. The letter breaks regulations by being three pages long; mail to and from prisoners was not supposed to be longer than one page. Her letter is headed "Irondale Home July 28th, 1864" and, of course, directed to Macon.

Carrie's inner envelope and letter were posted in Richmond on August 17 after being exchanged by flag of truce and the outer envelope of origin with the U.S. postage discarded, per regulations. But Penfield was already at Marine Hospital in Charleston with other prisoners under fire of their own guns. Thus, although addressed to Macon, the letter arrived at Marine Hospital and thus might be considered a dual prison cover.

There are only three covers recorded by Harrison from or to Marine Hospital in Charleston. If we count the July 28 letter with its August 17 cover, the Penfield correspondence doubles that number to six.

Carrie's July 28th letter mentions how delighted they all are to hear from him, as they were in suspense as to his whereabouts. Jim's letter to her from Danville, while in transit to Macon, had arrived only the evening before. The pencil docketing on the envelope indicates that he did not answer it until November 7, almost three months later.

The cover and enclosure shown in Figures 54 and 55 are also to Penfield while he was in Marine Hospital. The correspondence is docketed "No. 101" indicating the sender numbered the correspondence, a common practice during the war when mail delivery was uncertain at best. It is dated Fair Haven, Vermont, September 14 [1864] and franked with a U.S. 3¢ rose 1861 issue. It is routed "Via Hilton Head" and marked, "Contains \$153 Conf. bills." There is also a faint pencil notation at top left which I read to say (educated guess), "Exchange this in Confederate funds." The letter is from his brother-in-law, Benjamin Nichols, who is transmitting Confederate currency received from returned soldiers, hoping Penfield can use it. But also he sends "Greenbacks" to Gen. Foster requesting him to exchange it for gold or Confederate funds and to send it on to Penfield.

The September 26 [1864] dated cover in Figure 56 is also addressed to Penfield while incarcerated at Marine Hospital. The enclosed letter (Figure 57) is from his sister, Carrie, and dated at Fair Haven on September 25. As with the earlier cover, this one is noted as answered Nov 7/64.

The Situation in Charleston Intensifies

The situation in Charleston intensified when General Sherman's forces captured Atlanta on September 2. The Confederate government was concerned that Sherman would move southward to Andersonville and Macon, freeing tens of thousands of prisoners and allowing them to wreak havoc on virtually undefended central Georgia. Richmond greatly desired to keep as many Federal prisoners as far away from Sherman as possible, and the captured Yankees continued to pour into the Charleston area.

On September 7, the Federal stockade on Morris Island opened and was quickly filled with the Confederate prisoners, numbering a little less than 600 due to deaths from disease. In a purposeful mirroring of the living conditions of their Federal counterparts, the Rebels were housed in A-frame tents and very poorly fed. At night they were subjected to the swarms of sand fleas, mosquitoes, and drenching thunderstorms all common to coastal South Carolina. The Federals did not issue blankets, and the men were forced to sleep in the sand. All the while, they were

exposed to cannon shells and the scorching sun with not so much as one tree to provide shade.

As reports of the arrival of the Confederate officers in the stockade on Morris Island reached Confederate headquarters, Jones suggested that harsh methods of reprisal were necessary. On September 7 he wrote to the Confederate high command in Richmond: "If the department thinks it proper to retaliate by placing Yankee officers in Sumter or other batteries, let the order be given, prompt action should be taken. Please instruct me what if any authority I have over prisoners."

On September 8, Penfield wrote in his diary that, "600 Reb Officer reported on Morris Island under guard." In general, the "jungle telegraph" seemed to be pretty accurate! The same day, he noted, "*Shelling Continued-Negro Barber Killed by Shell, another striking ½ mile from Arsenal.*" On September 11, he wrote, "*The Anderson[ville] Prisoners Reported removed to Savannah-Charleston & other places.*"

Throughout the month of September, the bombardment continued. The Confederate prisoners' meager rations often consisted of only two pieces ofhardtack a day. On a good day, a prisoner might receive some worm eatenhardtack, a tiny one-ounce chunk of bacon and a bowl of thin soup. Union prisoners fared little better.

General Jones' threats to put Union prisoners on the ramparts of Fort Sumter never materialized, and on October 8 the Union captives in Charleston were removed to cities farther inland. The Southern captives' ordeal continued, however, until October 21, when, after forty-five days of exposure to shellfire, the weakened soldiers were finally transferred to Fort Pulaski at Savannah, Georgia, where they were crowded into the cold, damp casemates of the fort.

On November 19, an attempt to relieve overcrowding was made by sending 197 of the men back to Hilton Head. For forty-two days, a "retaliation ration" of ten ounces of moldy cornmeal and soured onion pickles was the only food issued to the prisoners. Thirteen men died at Fort Pulaski, and five died at Hilton Head. Though sympathetic, their Union guard was under strict orders not to relieve any suffering.

Penfield writes repeatedly of similar treatment to Union officers. One of his entries that autumn states, "*Two ladies bring bread for the Officer & are sent off the walk by Comdr Capt. Sheldon & he does not permit Sisters of Mercy.*" (Capt. Stephen H. Sheldon, 15th South Carolina Infantry, Company B) On the other hand, there is no indication that the guards ate any better than the prisoners on either side.

A blot on the record of both sides

It is difficult to say who was at fault for the ignominy of the "600"—both North and South. Jones was the first to place prisoners under fire but, on the other hand, the Federal Army was firing into a city where they were aware civilians still resided. General Grant must also shoulder some blame, for his orders halted prisoner exchanges. Both sides resorted to tactics they knew were against the code of honor they had learned at West Point. Regardless whose fault it was, the treatment of the prisoners in Charleston Harbor remains one of the most ignominious and contentious incidents of the Civil War.

Off to Columbia – Camp Sorghum and Camp Asylum

On October 5, the rumor was that, "*Jail Yard, Work House & 100 from Marine to go to Columbia.*" The next day, Penfield finds himself among those leaving for Columbia and on the 7th, "*arrived at Columbia-Counted in two rows-about a doz fell off the Cars-Marched out 3 miles & put in Camp with Cadets & Artillery over us.*" On October 8th, "In Open Camp-12 for water to the sink & no tents. Squads organized 14."

Penfield was initially held at Camp Sorghum, so called because cornmeal and sorghum were the main staples. Meat, other rations, and wood

1864
 My dear brother
 The last letter recd from you was to Allen dated Aug 10th. I have rec^d since the one sent from Danville. You speak of having written to me but none has not come. I have written you several letters that you have not rec^d. It seems a long time since we have heard from you. We hope you have rec^d the things sent from here by the Dr. Pether & I went home the 13th to see dear little George, who was very sick with 5th fever. He knew us all but not long for he fell asleep in death at 10 o'clock the morning of the 14th. He was a great fat & a dear boy. We shall all miss him so much. The family are all drooping of grief, but dear loss is his gain. Cousin has been very sick with the same disease, nearly had it light. We hope you can come to us, say soon. Every letter little Henry has a wish that he wishes Uncle Sam would come home. We will do. Pether has 2nd Regt. 1st Div. & gone to start out west for Penfield. I shall go to Charman first; wish you could meet us at Somers Rapids. Henry has not yet able to go a crossing ship, I wish he did; he may decide to meet me in Nagasaki. Aunt Wood & Cousin George were here last week Monday; they went back to Boston Thursday. Have been boarding at the Hotel in Stamford & wish they were very anxious to receive a visit from you want we should take you there as soon as you have had a good look at you. My & we read lots of love

Figure 57. September 25 letter from Fair Haven, Vermont, from Penfield's sister, Carrie. Reached him at Marine Hospital, Charleston.

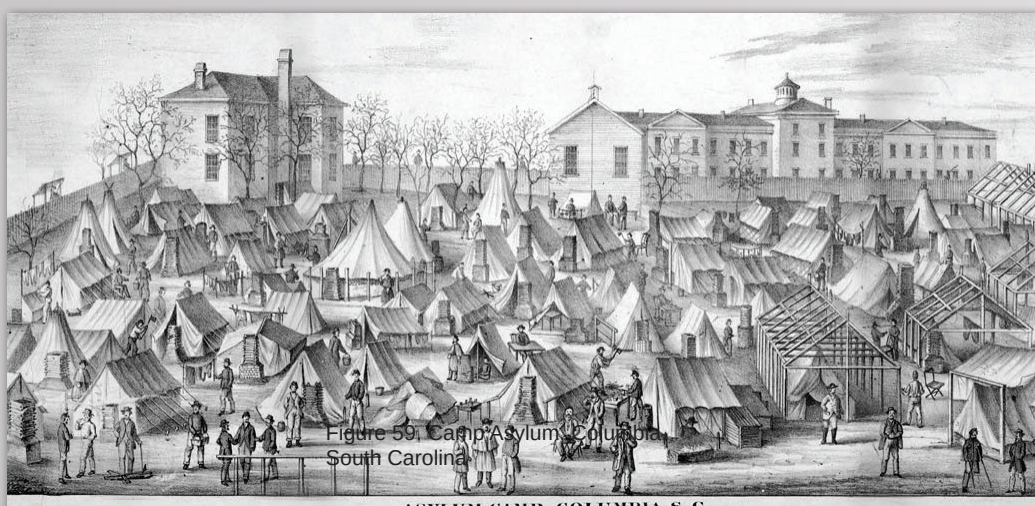


Figure 59. Camp Asylum, Columbia, South Carolina.

ASYLUM CAMP, COLUMBIA, S. C.



Figure 58. Camp Sorghum, Columbia, South Carolina

CAMP SORGHUM, COLUMBIA, S. C.

Camp Sorghum, Columbia, S.C., lithograph, BVII, U.S. History Civil War Pictorial Works, Military Posts, Special Collections & Archives, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University.

I wish you a Merry Christmas at home
 Sandale Tenn Dec 25th 1864
 It is a long time since we have heard from you by letter, as your last received, was dated Oct 5th to the Dr. we heard through Willie's boy that you were well; when he left he was a month on the way & had rather a severe time. There was a letter in the last Albany paper, dated the 18th from Capt. J. S. Pether, to his wife we are very thankful to hear that much. We have been hoping and praying that you may be exchanged & we still hope on. I do think you have served your time as a prisoner of war, one year & a month. Now what you please ask them to let you come home & stay as long & longer. I conclude you do not receive my letters, you will find many changes in our family circle of relatives since you left our little Georgia child so suddenly. Cousin Maria is quite sick when at home & well, all the other friends are about as usual Henry is some better, but cannot labor much has to be very careful. Pether has been at home so far this winter (since before election) they had not been over is waiting for you to come. Cousin Pether is there you expecting are here to spend the remainder of the winter & spring the winter you while we were in Danfield. I was death when he is looking very well. We hope to see him here when you come.

Figure 61. Letter to Penfield from sister Carrie while he was captive at Camp Asylum.

of Miss
 Major James A Penfield
 - (S.M.C.)
 Prisoner of War
 Columbia
 S. C.
 (Postmark: RICHMOND VA JAN 16)


Figure 60. CSA 11 tied Richmond postmark to Penfield while held at Camp Asylum, Columbia, South Carolina.

Hudson N.J. Jan'y 15. 1864
 My dear Major
 I arrived home from Savannah two days since, having been there since 28th Dec. My health is much improved but I hope with good nursing to get around again by and by. My mother she can get me up again good as new.
 I hear that Dr. Wether is exchanged, & also that Capt Bryant whom I had but sight of since November last has returned safely.
 I have heard nothing lately on the subject of exchange, but will inform you my opinion on the subject, which I will be able to prosecute in Washington in a few days. I do not anything hopeful on that much vexed question. I and truly hope it will not be long before we see you again.
 Capt Wether is assigned to the 1st Regt with you Sherman and Army. White is of your Regiment.
 Please convey my affectionate regards to Col. Porter, Ryder, Mathis, Scott, Beach and other friends and tell them to write me.
 Dear Maj
 Yours sincerely
 H. A. D. Merritt
 Capt 5th Regt

Figure 63. Letter from Henry A. D. Merritt, a friend in the same regiment who escaped from Columbia confinement with nearly 400 other prisoners.

Figure 62. CSA 12 tied Richmond circular datestamp, to Penfield at Camp Asylum, Columbia.

Capt. James A Penfield
 Prisoner of War
 Columbia
 South Carolina
 (Postmark: RICHMOND VA JAN 22)



were in short supply. Sutlers were often not allowed to sell and, if they did, meat and other goods were often stolen. If the thieves were caught, they were generally shot on the spot. Camp Sorghum was a make-shift prison for approximately 1,400 Union officers which consisted of a five-acre tract of open field without walls, fences, buildings or other facilities. There was a “deadline” comprised of wood planks inside the camp’s boundaries. “Deadline” need not be defined. Escapes were common, none the less; some says 25% escaped. Tunneling was common. One of these escapees was Penfield’s friend, Lt. Henry A. D. Merritt, who is noted in Jim’s diary as having escaped on November 28, 1864, along with almost 400 others.

Camp Sorghum was closed down in December 1864, a short existence. General Sherman camped on the abandoned Camp Sorghum site the day before his attack on Columbia.¹⁷ (Figure 58)

On December 4, 1864, Penfield and others are moved to Camp Asylum—also referred to as “Camp Lunacy.” This prison camp was hastily erected on the grounds of the South Carolina Lunatic Asylum in October 1864. Dr. John W. Parker, the superintendent, opposed a plan to turn his complex into a prisoner-of-war camp. Although the Confederate Army did not get the asylum itself, the grounds were used as a prison camp for Union officers from October 1864 to February 1865. Penfield writes that they are to build three buildings, one of which is to be a for a hospital. (Figure 59)

Two covers are addressed to Penfield while he was held at Camp Asylum. Harrison records only eight covers from this camp; this correspondence extends that number by two.

The first Camp Asylum cover, shown in Figure 60, is franked with a 10¢ blue, type I, tied by a Richmond, Virginia, January 23, 1865, circular datestamp. The enclosed letter (Figure 61) is from his sister, Carrie, and is headed “Irondale Home” on Christmas Day 1864 bemoaning the fact that letters, for the most part, seem to be undelivered in both directions.

The second Camp Asylum cover is franked with 10¢ blue, type II, tied by a Richmond, Virginia, February 3, 1865, circular datestamp as well as with a U.S. 3¢ rose and New York January 16 postmark of origin. (Figure 62) While there was supposed to be an inner and outer envelope, the latter to be discarded at the exchange point, this was occasionally not done. Covers with stamps from both North and South on one envelope are more highly prized than the properly posted versions. The enclosed letter (Figure 63) was from escaped prisoner Henry Merritt, a close friend who served in the same regiment with Jim Penfield. In prior letters from home during this period, there were mentions of Henry being weak and in poor health after his return.

Like his friend, Jim Penfield, Henry Merritt (Figure 64) enlisted in the 5th New York Cavalry at the age of 28 on October 4, 1861, at New York. He was wounded and captured more than once, ultimately taking a similar tour of Southern prisons beginning with Libby and ending with a successful escape from Camp Sorghum in Columbia, as noted in Jim’s diary. He was promoted to Major February 18, 1865, to rank from November 14, 1864.

Merritt’s letter is headed “Hudson N.J. Jany 15. 1865” to “My Dear Major” saying in part, “I arrived home from Savannah two days since, having been there since 28th Dec. My health is much impaired but I hope with good nursing to get around again by and bye...Have heard nothing lately on the subject of exchange, but will inform you of my enquiries on the subject which I will be able to prosecute in Washington in a few days elicit anything hopeful on that much vexed question. I ardently hope it will not be long before we see you again.” He offers information on others released or re-assigned. And signs it “H.A.D. Merritt, Capt. 5 N.Y.C.” Merritt did not

yet know of his own promotion to Major.

On the back of Merritt’s letter (Figure 65), is a paraphrase of the first stanza of Samuel H. M. Byers’ famous poem “Sherman’s March to the Sea” which gave that campaign its name. It was set to music by a member of the glee club, Lieut. John Rockwell. The glee club was formed while they were imprisoned at Columbia and, according to Byers himself, sung daily by the soldiers. Byers (1838-1933) served with Sherman; he was captured and escaped from Southern prisons multiple times.¹⁸ (Figure 66)

Our Camp fires shone bright on the mountains
That formed on the river below;
Around them our veterans lay sleeping
The sentinels watching the fire:
When a rider came out from the darkness
That hung over mountains and trees,
And Shouted “Boys up and be ready!
For Sherman Will March to the Sea
Free at Last!

Jim Penfield’s last diary entry was January 1, 1865, due merely to the lack of more pages. But it was not the last of his prison trials.

With rumors rife regarding a raid on Columbia in the face of Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman’s forces, a prison was being constructed at Killian’s Mills, eleven miles from Columbia. The work was being pressed forward as swiftly as possible, and the prison was to be ready for the reception of over 15,000 prisoners by February 22nd.

Between February 13-14, 1865, State Troops escorted 1,200 prisoners to Charlotte, North Carolina, and ultimately to Wilmington, where those who had not escaped were turned over to Federal authorities during the first week of March 1865.¹⁹ Jim Penfield was among that number. He was finally released on March 1, 1865, and reported to Camp Parole in Annapolis, Maryland.

News of Jim’s release spread quickly to family and friends. Figures 67 and 68 show a joyful telegram from a New York friend dated March 10, 1865. It is addressed (and misspelled by telegraph operator) to “*Jas. A. Pennfield Returned Pris, 5th N.Y. Cav. Glory hallelujah!!! Jim!! Thank God you’re out of Jeff’s hands prison at last. Come on. I. S. Scott, 27 Wall St.*”

A New York posted envelope dated March 14 [1865] is shown in Figure 69 addressed to “Major (or Capt) James A. Penfield (returned prisoner) 5 N.Y. Cavalry, Annapolis, Maryland.”

On March 19th he was granted a thirty-day leave. Jim returned to his regiment on May 1st and the next day was honorably discharged, having tendered his resignation due to “private affairs.”

Penfield’s 1882 pension card indicates that he was promoted to the rank of Major on May 28, 1865 (Figure 70).

A pension of \$20 a month was granted him for partial disability due to his war injuries, although it took him two years to prove his injury. His honorable discharge dates from March 15, 1865 (Figure 71).

Figure 72 officially makes known his promotion to Captain and Major and Figure 73 shows a Muster Roll that notes his status and grade from his mustering in to his resignation.

In the “New York Town Clerk’s Registers of Men Who Served in the Civil War,” James A. Penfield is listed (some punctuation added for sake of clarity) as “*Promoted 1st Lieut. Dec 11, 1861; Capt. Sept. 26, 1861; Maj[or] Mar. 29, 1864; Brevet Lt. Col. Oct. 26, 1865. In Battles [of] Orange C.H., Kelly’s Ford, Bull Run 2d Manassas, Hunterstown, Gettysburg, Snickersburg, Hagerstown where he was cut on head with saber & taken prisoner July 6, 1863. Sent to Richmond then to Dansville (sic), Macon,*

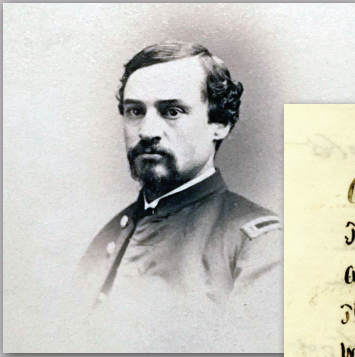


Figure 64. Henry A. D. Merritt, 5th New York Cavalry.

Our camp fires shone bright on the mountains
 That fringed on the river below;
 Around them our veterans lay sleeping
 The sentinels watching the foe.
 When a rider came out from the darkness
 That hung over mountain and tree,
 And shouted "Boys up and be ready!
 For Sherman will march to the sea"

Figure 65. The back of Merritt's letter where he paraphrases the first stanza of Samuel Byer's "Sherman's March to the Sea" sung daily by the prison glee club in Columbia.

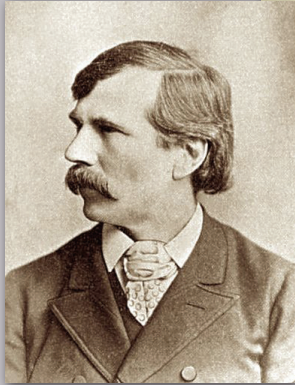


Figure 66. Samuel Hawkins Marshall Byers III – author of "Sherman's March to the Sea."

Figure 67. Annapolis Telegraph Office telegram reacting to the joyous news of Penfield's release from prison.

Office Annapolis Telegraph Company.

The following message was received at this Office
 at 6 o'clock March 10th 1865
 dated New York, 10th 1865

Joe. A. Penfield
 Returned Prisoner, 5th N.Y. Cav.

Glory hallelujah!!! Jim!!
 Thank God you're out of
 Jeff's ~~haxe~~ prison or last.
 Come on.

D. S. Scott
 27 Wall St.

Figure 70. Penfield pension card.

| | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| DEAD NAME OF SOLDIER: Penfield, James A. | | | | |
| SERVICE: Late rank, Capt Co. 76. 5 Regt N. Y. Cav. | | | | |
| TERM OF SERVICE: Enlisted Sept 23, 1861 Discharged May 28, 1865 | | | | |
| DATE OF FILING. | CLASS. | APPLICATION NO. | LAW. | CERTIFICATE NO. |
| 1862. Mar 1 | Invalid, Widow, Minor | 440.646 | | 272.932 |

SPECIAL ORDERS, No. 210. } WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE, Washington, May 6th, 1865.

(Extract.)

18. Captain James A. Penfield, 5th New York Cavalry, having tendered his resignation, is hereby honorably discharged the service of the United States, on account of private reasons, to date from March 15th, 1865, with condition that he shall receive no final payments, until he has satisfied the Pay Department that he is not indebted to the Government.

By order of the Secretary of War:
 W. A. NICHOLS,
 Assistant Adjutant General.

OFFICIAL:
 [Signature]
 Assistant Adjutant General.

Address "The Officer in charge of the Record and Pension Division, War Department, Washington, D.C."

Subject: James A. Penfield 321,570

War Department,
 Washington City,
 March 17th 1892.

To the
 Adjutant General,
 State of New York
 Albany, N.Y.

Sir:

I am directed by the Secretary of War to inform you that, under the provisions of the act approved June 3, 1864, and the acts amendatory thereof, James A. Penfield is considered by this Department as commissioned to the grade of: Captain and Major
 Company: 5th Regiment, New York Cavalry Volunteers
 to date Sept 26, 1862 and Sept 4, 1864.

Very respectfully,
 [Signature]
 Adjutant General and Asst. Surgeon, U.S. Army.

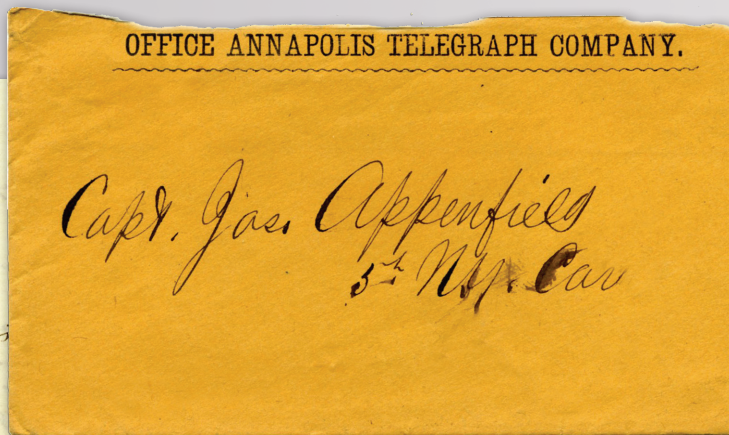


Figure 68. Annapolis Telegraph Office envelope.



Figure 69. New York entire dated March 14 [1865] addressed to "Major (or Capt) James A. Penfield (returned prisoner) 5 N.Y. Cavalry, Annapolis, Maryland."

M.S.R. Penfield, James A.

| AGE | ENLISTED | | | | MUSTERED IN | | | | GRADE | COMP. | REPT. |
|-----|----------|------|-------|------|-------------|------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| | YEAR | DAY | MONTH | YEAR | YEAR | DAY | MONTH | YEAR | | | |
| 35 | 23 | Sept | 1861 | 1861 | 22 | Oct | 1861 | 2nd Lt | H | 1st | Capt |
| | | | | | 24 | Dec | 1861 | 1st Lt | | | |
| | | | | | 1 | Oct | 1862 | Captain | | | |
| | | | | | 4 | Sept | 1864 | 1st Major | | | |

LEFT THE ORGANIZATION: 4

| HOW. | WHEN. | | | IN WHAT GRADE. | EXPLANATION. |
|------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| | DAY | MONTH | YEAR. | | |
| M.O. | 24 | Dec | 61 | 2nd Lt | at Washington, D.C. for promotion |
| M.O. | 24 | Sept | 62 | 1st Lt | " |
| M.O. | 1 | Oct | 62 | Captain | " |
| M.O. | 4 | Sept | 64 | 1st Major | " |

REMARKS: MR. Oct 1861, Captained July 6, 1863. Aggravation, md. Taken into the field, Wounded, Released Nov 1865. Resigned May 2, 1865. MR. Oct 1862, Present as Capt. MR. Oct 1862, promoted; Major May 28, 1864, to rank from Mch 1864, vice [unclear] promoted; not mustered.

Figure 72. Official document showing Penfield's promotion to both Captain and Major.

Figure 73. Printed Muster Roll showing Penfield's status and grade from mustering in to resignation.

Charleston, Columbia, Charlotte, Raleigh, Goldsboro. Exchanged April 1865, imprisoned 21 months, discharged May 2, 1865. Still living. PO Crown Point Center NY."

As Penfield was no longer journaling in 1865, this official New York register (undated page) traces his whereabouts between Camp Asylum in Columbia and his ultimate exchange; his route is shown as Charlotte, Raleigh and Goldsboro, North Carolina. The brevet rank of Lt. Col., even after his service ended, was undoubtedly a reward for meritorious conduct without receiving the authority, precedence or pay of real rank. There is considerable post-war correspondence addressing him with the rank of Lt. Colonel or Colonel.

The 5th New York Cavalry War Horses

Penfield's favorite mount was named Billy. In the fall of 1863, Billy was sent home to Crown Point where he lived an honored retiree for 22 years. His grave on the Penfield farm is marked with a granite monument bearing the inscription:

BILLY
Col. James A. Penfield's War Horse
1854-1885

Served in Co. H, 5th N.Y. Volunteer Cavalry. Battles:
Winchester, Harper's Ferry, Dranee C. House,
Cedar Mt. Waterloo Bridge, Bull Run, Hanover,
Gettysburg, Monterey Pass.

Although Billy was never wounded in battle, he did become lame for a few days. His incapacity forced Penfield to select another horse. The horse was named Cockeye due to his one blind eye and the fact that he carried his head cocked to one side. While leading a charge at Hagerstown, Cockeye was killed, falling on his rider. Penfield was struck with a saber blow to the head which began the chain of events that caused his unwelcome tour of the South.

When the 5th New York Cavalry was mustered out at Hart's Island, New York, July 19, 1865, only seven of the original horses survived. The toll of dead, wounded, and captured extended from the cavalrymen to their gallant war horses. Morgans were a favored mount because they were sensible under fire and could march tirelessly all day.

John Hammond also built a monument to Pink, his favored war horse. There are many other storied horses from the Civil War.²⁰ Most Civil War buffs can easily come up with Black Bess (John Hunt Morgan), Blackjack (Jefferson Davis), Cincinnati (U.S. Grant), Traveller (R.E. Lee) and others.

The words of General John Hammond are inscribed on the monument to his horse:

PINK
Died Sunday, May 25, 1886
Aged 30 years

This horse carried his master 25 years. Was never known to show fatigue while other horses in cavalry and flying artillery were dying from want of food and exhaustion. He was present in 88 skirmishes and 34 battles, notably Winchester, Orange Court House, Second Bull Run, Hanover, Pa., Gettysburg, Hanover, Va., Brandy Plains, Buckland Mills, the Wilderness, Spotsylvania Court House, North Annee, Ashland, White Oaks Swamp, Reams Station.

"What is the sentiment, if not love, that ties a man to the horse which has carried him to victory in the charge, or which has borne him to safety in defeat... and which often, by a keener and ever alert sense, warns of coming surprise or given notice of ambush by a snort?" E.E. Barker

Postwar

James A. Penfield did not rejoin his father's iron mining business af-

ter the war. Instead he moved to Boston where he married his second cousin, Elizabeth (Lizzie) Richards Wood on November 28, 1866. Soon after, he was employed as Superintendent of Iron Works in Boston.

Jim had come full circle from his first days in the 5th New York Cavalry when he was stationed at Annapolis in 1861 until the spring of 1865 during his last days at Camp Parole in Annapolis. It must have seemed a lifetime. He had survived bloody battles where he participated on a level playing field to the misery and hopelessness that characterized inequitable imprisonment, including acting as a human shield. Penfield's own narrative, even in the briefest of diary entries, offers a compelling look at the war as can only be told by one who personally endured it. The simple act of daily journaling undoubtedly helped his psyche.

Prison camps during the Civil War were potentially more dangerous and more terrifying than the battles themselves. Approximately 56,000 men died in prison camps over the course of the war, accounting for roughly 10% of the war's total death toll.

"War is hell," is a phrase credited to Union General Sherman. Undeniably.

Endnotes:

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