



The Civil War Post

Patricia A. Kaufmann

Castle Williams Prisoner-of-War Cover From Survivor of Battle of the Crater

In the shadow of Manhattan Island, only 800 yards from its southern tip, is Governors Island, a 172-acre island in New York Harbor. Even closer is Brooklyn to the east, separated by the 400-yard-wide Buttermilk Channel. The National Park Service administers a portion of the island, including historic Castle Williams. Figures 1 and 2 show aerial and ground views of the island and one side of Castle Williams.

Castle Williams is a three-tiered, circular, casemated fortification built between 1807 and 1811; it served as a prototype for a new era of coastal fortification, and was designed by American military engineer, Lt.-Col. Jonathan Williams. Its massive masonry walls were typical of fortifications erected in the years prior to the War of 1812. Williams was the Army's Chief Engineer and the first superintendent of the Military Academy at West Point. A detailed series of black and white photos, taken in the mid-1900s, are housed in the Library of Congress, as well as copies of preliminary plans for renovation and alteration.

During the American Civil War, the prisoners housed at Castle Williams came from Fort Pulaski near Savannah, Ga., and the Confederate forts at Hatteras Inlet, N.C. Among the

prisoners was also a group of Choctaw Indians, confined there in June 1863. The New York Harbor Governor's Island prisons, Castle Williams for enlisted men, and Fort Columbus for officers, were first used in August 1861 and remained in use until April 1865. Buried there are 375 Confederate prisoners.

Covers from Castle Williams are rare. Harrison¹ records only 12 covers, and two are merely noted as containing letters.

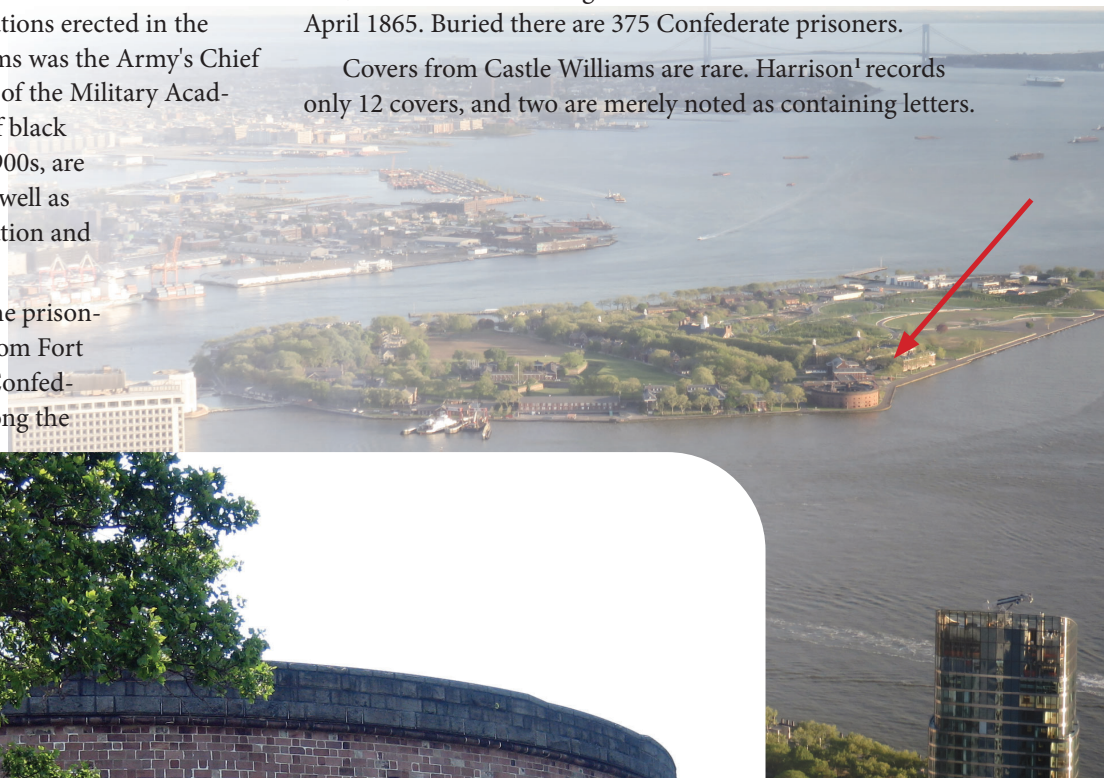


Figure 1 (above). A 2017 aerial view of Governor's Island, by Antony-22, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 2 (left). Castle Williams in 2007, photo by Chris Ruvolo.

Castle Williams
Governor's Island
New York
Harbor

Dear Friend

I wrote to you some time ago but have received no answer so I will write again to let you know how I am getting along & also to hear from my dear friend for such you have proven to be my wound is doing well & also all the rest of my companions except Mr Holland his wound is doing well, but he has taken sick & is now in hospital Dear Friend I would like very much if you would send me sum small change to enable me to purchase some few articles for wick I am in need of if you will do this I will be ever grateful for the favor Mr Jackson requested me to say he would ask the similar favor he is the one with his arm off if you reckett him, I see no prospect

1864.
Dec. 2
Padgett
Mrs Harriet I. Miller
Bristol
R. I.

NEW YORK
DEC 3
3c

Southbound mail entered the U.S. mails at nearby New York City, and the Confederate mails at Norfolk or Petersburg, Va.

Figure 3 shows a prisoner-of-war cover franked with a U.S. 3¢ rose (Scott 65) barely tied to cover by a neat Dec 3, 1864, New York duplex. It is addressed to Mrs. Harriet I. Miller, Bristol, R.I. The accompanying two-page letter is headed “Castle Williams Governor’s Island, New York, Dec 2, 1864.”

The letter is partially quoted, with spelling and grammar mistakes as written. Prisoner T.D. Padgett states, “my wound is doing well ... I would like very much if you would send me sum small change to enable me to purchase some few articles for wick

of our leaving here soon so if you will send us any money it will reach us safely with the much love & high Esteem I Remain your friend
Timothy D Padgett

Direct
T D Padgett
Co C 6th Va Regt
Prisoners of War
Governors Island
New York Harbor
N.Y.

Figure 3 (left). Prisoner-of-war cover from Castle Williams with first page of letter headed “Castle Williams Governor’s Island, New York, Dec 2, 1864.”

Figure 4. Second page of Castle Williams POW letter, signed T.D. Padgett Co C, 6th Va.

I am in need of ... Mr. Jackson requested me to say he would ask the similar favor he is the one with his arm off if you reckett him, I see no prospect of our leaving here soon.”

The letter is signed Timothy D. Padgett, as seen in Figure 4. He instructs that letters and money be sent, “Direct T.D. Padgett Co C 6th Va. Regt Prisoner of War Governors Island New York Harbor N.Y.”

Timothy D. Padgett enlisted at Norfolk City, Va., at age 22, as a private April 22, 1861, in Company C, 6th Regiment Virginia Infantry, Capt. William Lamb’s Company (Woodis Rifles). His occupation was listed as a tinner in his military records in National Archives, shown in Figure 5.

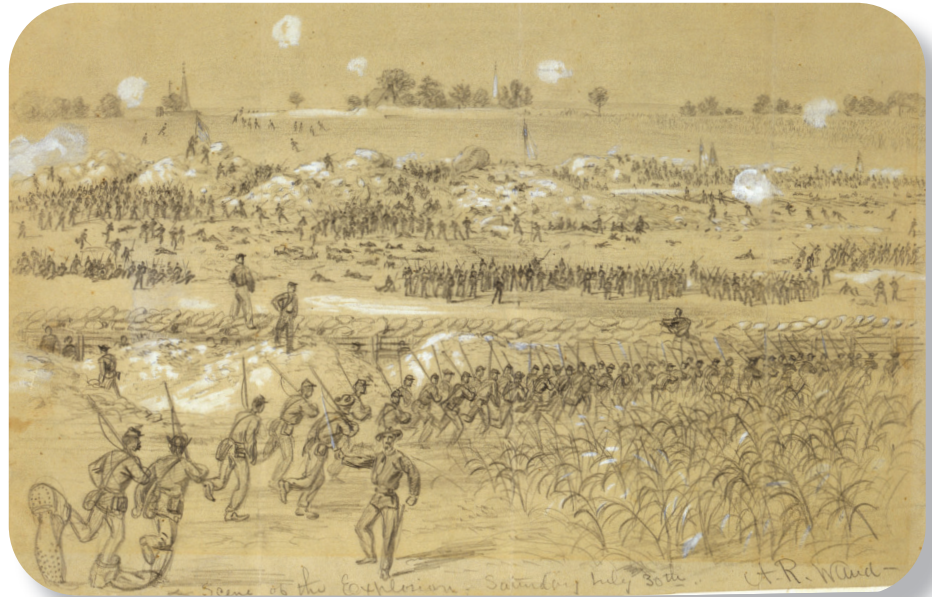
The 6th Virginia participated in the campaigns of the Army of Northern Virginia from the Seven Days’ Battles to Cold Harbor, then saw action in the Petersburg trenches and around Appomattox. In 1861, Col. William Mahone was one of the unit field officers. He later rose to general and U.S. senator from Virginia after the war (1881-87).

Figure 5 (below). Military record of Timothy D. Padgett, showing him as a tinner by trade.

Figure 6 (right). Battle of the Crater, as sketched by Alfred Waud; Padgett was wounded and captured there July 30, 1864.

Figure 7 (bottom). Aftermath of the Battle of the Crater, Petersburg, Va., as shown in *The Photographic History of the Civil War* (1911).

(Confederate.)
P | **6** | **Va.**
Timothy Padgett
Pvt. } Capt. William Lamb's Company
 } (Woodis Rifles),
 } 6 Regiment Virginia Infantry *
 Age *22* years.
 Appears on
Company Muster Roll
 of the organization named above, from the city
 of Norfolk,
 for *Apr. 18 to June 30*, 1861.
 Dated July 2, 1861.
 Occupation *Tinner*
 Enrolled for active service:
 When *Apr. 22*, 1861
 Where *Norfolk City*
 By whom *Capt. Wm. Lamb*
 Mustered into service:
 When *Apr. 30*, 1861
 Where *Norfolk City*
 By whom *Capt. C. Bradford*
 Last paid:
 By whom
 To what time 1861
 Remarks:
 *This company subsequently became Company C, 6th Regiment Virginia Infantry.
 The 6th Regiment Virginia Infantry was organized May 13, 1861, and accepted into the service of the Confederate States July 1, 1861. (1st) Companies B and E were detached September 1, 1861, and (2d) Companies H and I were assigned to the regiment about October 1, 1861. A part of Captain Vickery's Artillery Company was organized as an independent company June 8, 1861, under Captain Frank Huger, and finally became Captain Moore's Company Virginia Artillery. About July 1, 1861, Captain Ferguson's Company was assigned as Company H, 15th Regiment Virginia Infantry, and Captain Vickery's and Woodger's Companies as (1st) Company H and Company I, 15th Regiment Virginia Infantry respectively. The regiment was reorganized May 2, 1862.
 Book mark:
oak Ryan
 (542) Copyist



Pvt. Padgett was promoted to sergeant May 1, 1862. He was captured near Fredericksburg May 3, 1863, and transferred to City Point, Va., for exchange on May 10, 1863.

Padgett is recorded on patient rolls in Lovell USA General Hospital, Portsmouth Grove, R.I., where he likely made the acquaintance of Mrs. Miller. He was received Aug 17, 1864, captured in front of Petersburg July 30, 1864, at the Battle of the Crater as shown in Figures 6 and 7. He is listed with a gunshot wound of the left hand.

Gen. Mahone is best known for regaining the initiative at Petersburg, while Southern troops were still in shock after an enormous load of black powder kegs were exploded beneath them by Union troops who were former coal miners and dug tunnels to set lethal explosive loads. Their initiative turned into a disaster for the Union with Mahone's counter-attack.

Padgett was transferred to Ft. Columbus, New York Harbor, on Oct. 20, 1864, shown among the prisoners received at Fort Columbus Oct 21, 1864. He was transferred to the prison at Elmira, N.Y., Dec. 4, 1864, the day after the subject letter was posted.

On April 15, 1865, it is noted Padgett wanted to take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States and wished to go to Sulphur County, W.V., where he had relatives residing. He was described in military records as 5-foot, 7 inches tall, with dark hair, hazel eyes, a dark complexion and with a residence in Lynchburg. Padgett was released June 6, 1865, to begin a new chapter in his life. ☐



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 Patricia (Trish) Kaufmann was first introduced to Confederate philately in 1965, became active in organized philately in 1969 and became a full-time dealer in 1973. Trish enjoys hearing from readers and may be reached at [trishkauf@comcast.net](mailto:trishkauf@comcast.net).

**Endnotes**

1. Galen D. Harrison, *Prisoners' Mail from the American Civil War, 1997*, self-published with funding from the Gerald V. Stewart Educational Trust Fund of the Confederate Stamp Alliance, page 171.