



# Camp Douglas News

Committed to the Preservation of Chicago History



Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation

Chicago, Illinois

Fall 2013

Volume 4, Issue 3

## Project Phases:

Awareness and Support: 2010-2014

Site Location and Site Planning: 2012-2014

Archaeological Investigation: 2012-2013

Virtual Camp Douglas: 2014

Construction: 2014-2015

## Dix-Hill Cartel

The Dix-Hill Cartel signed, July 22, 1862, provided for the exchange and parole of prisoners by the Union and Confederate forces.

The cartel addressed the exchange of prisoners by establishing a one-for-one exchange of soldiers of equal rank. Exchange of officers was on a sliding scale from four privates for a lieutenant to 60 privates for a general. It contemplated all prisoners being paroled within 10 days of capture to await exchange that was managed by agents representing each government.

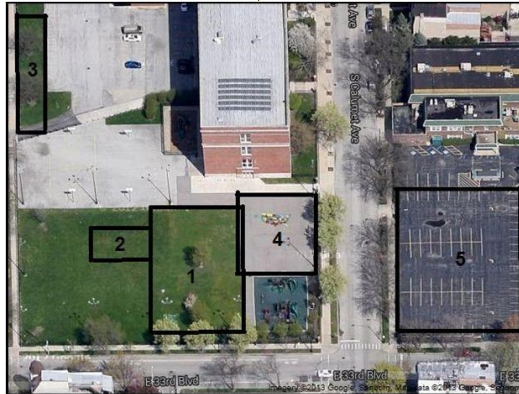
There was no mention of conditions by which a prisoner would be held since the cartel did not contemplate prisoners being held for more than 10 days. One article of the cartel forbid paroled prisoners from engaging in military activities including garrison duties.

Major exchanges of prisoners took place in October/November 1862 and May/July 1863. Prisoners during this time were held captive for between 6 and 7 months. The cartel was suspended in mid-1863.

## Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation—Latest News

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION-2013

A ground penetrating radar survey (right) of the grounds of Pershing West School, 32nd and Calumet, and the Griffin Funeral Home parking lot at 3232 S. King Drive, was completed by Dan Joyce from the Kenosha Museums in July.



Evaluation of the results by Dan and Michael Gregory, De Paul University, determined that an excavation at Pershing West was warranted. The excavation in areas 1 and 2 in the photo is scheduled to begin October 25 and should last approximately five days and will likely include three or four units.

Complete results will be reported in the next *Camp Douglas News*.

### CAMP DOUGLAS PRESENTATIONS

The Foundation continues to provide presentations to community, historical, and educational groups. These presentations provide a PowerPoint® format covering the history of Camp

Douglas, activities of the Foundation, including the archaeological investigations and Virtual Camp Douglas. Highlighted in the presentation are stories of individual prisoners at the camp from diaries, letters, and journals. Anyone interested in arranging a presentation should contact [dkeller@campdouglas.org](mailto:dkeller@campdouglas.org).

## First Prisoners and Early Deaths

It is reported in modern literature that Camp Douglas had the dubious distinction of having 387 of 3,884 prisoners die during February 1862. According to reports in the *Chicago Tribune*, the number of these deaths appears to be substantially overstated.



The battle at Fort Donelson began on February 12 in sleet, rain and snow with freezing temperatures. The fort surrendered to General Grant on February 16. The first prisoners from the battle arrived at Camp Douglas on February 20 after being transported by riverboat up the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers to the Ohio River and Cairo, IL and continuing to St. Louis on the Mississippi River. From Cairo and St. Louis prisoners were sent by rail to Chicago. The Chicago temperature on the 20th was 13° at 7 am, 26° at noon, and 28° at 7 pm. The high temperature for the 21st was 33°.

A *Chicago Tribune* article February 21 characterized the prisoners as "haggard and war-worn." The *Tribune* noted that on the 20th prisoners were seen "shivering in the snow."

"Many have no overcoats at all and supply in their place horse blankets, hearth rugs, pieces of carpet, coffee sacks, etc. etc." Additional prisoners arrived February 23. By February 28, prisoner count at the camp reached 4,459. The *Tribune* on March 7 reported 5,177 prisoners, "The great exposure of the men at Fort

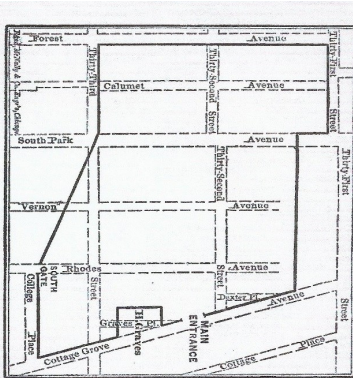
Donelson and during the transit hither, was the chief source of sickness among them, resulting in pneumonia and kindred diseases there being now nearly four hundred cases in the hospital, and about thirty-five having already terminated fatally. This mortality was to be expected under the circumstances." By April 2 143 deaths were reported.

While deaths in February were probably never the 387 reported, physical condition of the prisoners resulted in illness and death to many prisoners.

For more information of Camp Conditions see Winter 2011 *Camp Douglas News*.

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CAMP DOUGLAS, 1864-5.

Map prepared by William Bross for a paper read before the Chicago Historical Society, June 18, 1878

### A Chicago Story that Must to be Told

Join us at:  
www.campdouglas.org

### Future Events

Representatives from the Foundation will be at the following events:

- October 16-Illinois State University, Sr. Professionals, Normal, IL
- November 14-Des Plaines History Center
- December 7-8-Middle Tennessee Civil War Show, Franklin, TN.

### Artifacts Found



The stem of a clay smoking pipe was found at the barracks unit during the 2012 excavation. The piece, approximately 1 inch long and 1/4 inch in diameter had the letters HEN stamped on the left view of the stem and EAL on the right view. These letters were traced to the HENDERSON Pipe Company of Montreal, Canada. Henderson produced pipes between 1846 and 1876. Archaeologist Scott Demel believes that the pipe was likely from the camp. Items such as this from Canada were common during the Civil War.

## Recollections-Letters, Diaries and Journals

Note: This section is devoted to letters, diaries and journals of Civil War veterans. Often considered the best source of contemporaneous information on the war, readers must be cautioned that this material represents individual experiences and feelings. Letters often reflected what the writer thought recipient wanted to hear. In addition, many of the journals were written well after the war and include the frailties of age and time. Grammatical and spelling errors have not been corrected in quotes.

One of the early arrivals at Camp Douglas in February 1862 was Sgt. Charles Edward Taylor, 20th Mississippi Infantry. In his diary he stated. "We were very well provided for having good passenger cars to ride in which was a good stove and plenty of fuel." He stated that the rations were "Crackers, Bakers bread, chipped beef-fresh beef, Coffee already ground, sugar beans, cheese & very good barracks."



the frigid streets of Chicago, "Some would curse us and call us poor ignorant devils; some would curse Jeff Davis for getting us poor ignorant creatures into such a trap."

John M. Copley in his 1893 journal described the Sutlers at Camp Douglas after his arrival

On the other hand, Andrew Jackson Campbell an officer in the 48th Tennessee Infantry described the steamboats carrying them to Cairo, IL as "filthy." Another prisoner characterized the boat trip as aboard "rickety old craft." The stove in the engine room was used for cooking prisoner meals.

Upon arriving in Chicago, Private Milton A. Ryan, 14th Mississippi Infantry reported in his journal his experience parading through

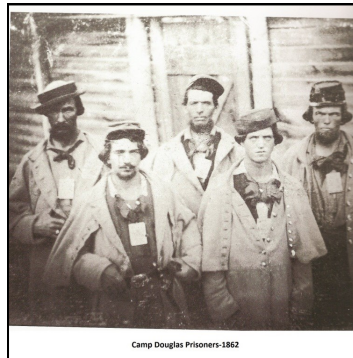
from the Battle of Nashville in December 1864. "A sutler is one who follows an army, but keeps himself far in the rear whenever there is a prospect of battle. He never shows himself near the front unless the enemy is known to be two or three hundred miles off. He sells provisions and various flashy and trashy articles of merchandise, which will generally catch all the small change soldiers carry in their pockets. Whenever he can do so on the sly, he will slip a soldier a little bust-head whisky ...Here [Camp Douglas] he is far in the rear and had no fears of the enemy on the front. He sold us some provisions and various articles of clothing, but no whiskey or intoxicating drinks of any kind; at least, I never knew of him doing it."

### Conspiracy to Kill Confederate Prisoners

It is often expressed that there was a conscious effort to kill Confederate prisoners at Camp Douglas by mistreatment, murder and starvation.

While conditions at the camp were unsatisfactory by today's standards, they generally mirrored conditions at Union installations throughout the country. During the early existence of the camp, failure by the U.S. Army to improve the facilities, including water and sewage, was a result of the belief that holding prisoners would be temporary. The Dix-Hill Cartel called for parole of prisoners within 10 days after capture.

Food generally was available to prisoners with 4,000 calories per day authorized. The lack of fresh fruits and vegetables as well as poor quality of meat and shortages by civilian suppliers were a problem throughout the war. (see Winter 2010 *Camp Douglas News*)



There is little evidence of guards being ordered to kill inmates at Camp Douglas. There were about 25 cases of prisoners being killed by guards. Over half were shot while trying to escape; hardly a conspiracy to murder prisoners.

Failure to provide adequate clothing and blankets is also offered as proof of a conspiracy. Confederate soldiers shown in the photograph to the left were identified as "Camp Douglas Prisoners 1862."

These prisoners are wearing heavy overcoats that, based on color and style, were Union issue. Clothing and blankets were provided, often in insufficient quantities. It was reported in April 1862 that 300 sets of clothing, including shoes and sufficient blankets for all were distributed to prisoners. These items could also be received from prisoner's family by mail.

*Special Thanks:* Volunteer Mary Jane (MJ) Grinstead has been editing *Camp Douglas News* for several years. Without her keen eye and sharp pencil this newsletter would be a mess! Thanks MJ, you're the best.  
D. Keller, Managing Director