

Chapter 4

Johnson's Island US Civil War Military Prison

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Abstract Throughout the United States' Civil War, the treatment of prisoners of war varied. Confederate and Union soldiers captured early in the war had a preconceived notion of how they were to be treated. As the war progressed, the Union changed their policies of treatment toward POWs. From Lincoln on down, those in charge struggled with this newly defined class of formerly recognized the US citizen. Johnson's Island prison, as the only stand-alone facility constructed by the Union, encapsulated their early commitment to the "humane treatment" of prisoners. As the Union's treatment policies changed, so did the physical landscape of Johnson's Island. The long-term archaeological exploration of Johnson's Island addresses changing prisoner treatment through this altered landscape.

Introduction

Abraham Lincoln faced something which no other president of the United States before or since has had to face—the citizenry divided and at civil war. Early in the insurrection, Lincoln's administration wanted to keep the conflict defined in terms of rebellious acts rather than recognize the Confederacy as a separate country. An early major hurdle for the Union was defining the status of those captured committing defiant acts. The South had granted ship owners letters of marque and reprisal

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if they were willing to engage the United States and seize goods. Lincoln's policy, in attempting to maintain this was not a war with a sovereign nation, pushed to have the crews of captured ships tried under municipal law (Hesseltine 1930:8). In response to the Union's capture of the Savannah, a vessel operating under the authority of the Confederate States, Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States, expressed to President Lincoln his desire to "mitigate the horrors" advocating these imprisoned privateers be treated as PoWs and not tried as pirates and potentially hung as traitors (ORA, Series II, Vol. III:6). President Davis was attempting to ensure President Lincoln would not embark on a policy of treating men operating under the authority of the Confederacy as criminals instead of providing them with the status of PoW and all the humane treatment military regulations provide.

Throughout the last half of 1861 and the early part of 1862, the Union participated with the South in unofficial special exchanges, being careful not to create a formal system of general exchange of prisoners which would at the same time recognize the legitimacy of the Confederacy. After some reluctance of the Union, they finally agreed to engage with the Confederacy in exploring how to resolve the growing numbers of captured prisoners. The exchange system for the American Civil War was fashioned after the one established in the War of 1812 between the United States and Great Britain (ORA, Series II, Vol. IV:824). The Dix-Hill cartel was signed on July 22, 1862 stating all captured prisoners were to be officially exchanged or paroled within 10 days (ORA, Series II, Vol. IV:267–268).

The formalization of the cartel initially helped to waylay some of the fear of retaliation postured by both sides as well as the soldiers' desire to know if captured, exchange would occur. Unfortunately, almost to the day the cartel was signed and came into effect, problems arose. Even with the problems, this did not keep both sides from attempting to institute the cartel, realizing they were not well equipped to handle the thousands of prisoners.

Prison Facilities

Both the Union and Confederacy had to manage the escalating numbers of PoWs even before the cartel was established. On July 12, 1861, Quartermaster General M.C. Meigs wrote Secretary of War Simon Cameron

At present persons arrested on suspicion of disloyalty are kept in the common jail of Washington. I am endeavoring to procure some building here more suitable for their temporary safe-keeping. Prisoners of war are entitled to proper accommodations, to courteous and respectful treatment, to one ration a day and to consideration according to rank (ORA, Series II, Vol. III, p.8).

Here, Meigs not only defines how PoWs are to be physically treated, he also notes their treatment is contingent upon rank. Meigs requested a Commissary of Prisoners be appointed and a site in the western Lake Erie area be chosen for a new

prison facility. By October 1861, the Union determined it needed to construct a facility specifically designed to confine PoWs. In the official correspondence between Quartermaster General M. C. Meigs and Lieutenant Colonel William Hoffman, Commissary of Prisoners, little direction was given to Hoffman on specific design concerns for the prison. Meigs expressed his interest that the prison be as economically constructed as possible and also located at a latitude that did not offer too harsh an environment (ORA, Series II, Vol. III, p49); the Confederate soldier was not accustomed to the harsh winters of the North. Since those confined at Camp Chase, Columbus, Ohio complained of the severe cold during the winter of 1861–1862, there would be little hope of establishing a prison in the western end of Lake Erie that did not include a harsh environment from a Southerner's perspective (ORA, Series II, Vol. I, PP 544–545).

Hoffman chose Johnson's Island after he had surveyed Put-in-Bay, Kelley's Island, and others north of the Marblehead Peninsula. Looking just to the south of the peninsula, he found Johnson's Island favorable due to its lack of inhabitants, close proximity to Sandusky allowing for provisions to be more easily obtained on a regular basis, and the ability of the Army to control the entire island and those that would have access to it (ORA, Series II, Vol. III, pp. 54–57). Quartermaster General Meigs immediately authorized Lieutenant Colonel Hoffman to proceed with the construction of the prison. He reminded Hoffman that the construction should be completed with "the strictest economy consistent with security and proper welfare of the prisoners" (ORA, Series II, Vol. III, pp. 122–123).

There was very little in the official records or other historic resources addressing the specific design concerns for the Johnson's Island prison. Exchange of prisoners was how captured soldiers were treated in past wars. Those that were retained were housed in facilities temporarily converted for prisoners or in civilian jails. At the beginning of the American Civil War, prisoners were housed in barracks or lands associated with military mustering stations. The increasing numbers of prisoners were housed in local jails and penitentiaries. The advent of the Union to construct a facility for all PoWs necessitated at least to some degree a definition of exactly how these prisoners would be handled.

Two separate approaches collided in the construction of the Johnson's Island prison depot. First, the concept of a prison structure was evolving as societies were struggling with the incarceration of criminals as well as other marginalized groups. The nineteenth century saw the use of the Panopticon as a means to house those needing removal from society for criminal acts (Foucault 1977:200–201). The Panopticon solidified the concept of observing the prisoner and thus exerting power over the incarcerated. This design had the central guard "tower" encircled by the housing units of the inmates. There were issues related to whether prisoners should have contact with other inmates, and two approaches appear in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century. The Philadelphia system advocated complete isolation, whereas the Auburn model allowed for contact with fellow inmates during the day (Foucault 1977:238). Although prisoners captured by the

Union in battle were not being rehabilitated, their imprisonment in established criminal prisons certainly had an effect on how they viewed their role as PoWs.

The second major focus affecting the construction and imprisonment at Johnson's Island was its military affiliation and the fact the PoW was not jailed for committing a crime. In fact, these men were part of a new category of "ambiguously defined noncitizens" (Casella 2007:33). There was no standard military PoW facility design and the regulations did not consider the citizenship of the captives. The regulations authorized one ration regardless of rank, adequate medical treatment, and respect of the private property when captured. Initially the planning of Johnson's Island included accommodations for both officers and enlisted men. The prison compound was planned to have an interior stake line separating the officers occupying Blocks 1–4 from Blocks 5–13 for the enlisted men (Frohman 1965:11). Hoffman's overall design of the prison allowed for constant surveillance of the prisoners from a high stockade wall surrounding the prison compound (Taylor 2011:70; Hunter 1971:27). Unlike a Panopticon construction, the prison facility at Johnson's Island did not allow constant surveillance or individual cells, and there was no attempt to restrict individuals from contact with others. There was an initial recognition that officers would be segregated and treated differently from the enlisted. As a military facility, the objective was to incarcerate the prisoners in as humane a condition as was possible.

The combination of civilian prison design with military needs for housing officers and enlisted men resulted in a facility where both the guard and captive struggled with their identity and control. Overall, the Union and Confederacy had no policy on adequate housing for those captured (see also Chaps. 2 and 3). The Union had been months into the war, and had already captured thousands of Confederates, before a Commissary General of Prisons was even appointed. One year of the war had passed before the first constructed prison specifically designed to house the PoWs was operational and receiving inmates. Prisoners were captured at rates much higher than adequate facilities could be constructed to contain them. The Union was unable to standardize management, leading to the mistreatment of those under its care. Casstevens (2005) identifies six categories of prison types used by both the Union and Confederacy: civilian jails, coastal fortifications, converted warehouses, enclosed barracks (as at Johnson's Island), walled tent camps, and empty stockades.

Johnson's Island demonstrates the military's attempt to create a humane PoW facility. The Union lacked a consistent approach to the treatment of PoWs with Johnson's Island being the only stand-alone prison complex that was built. Other facilities designated as PoW depots were typically adapted from other uses or built onto existing military installations. Large open stockades or tent camps were less than ideal in terms of how the Union envisioned prisoner treatment. Nevertheless, Johnson's Island had not even been operational a week before its role as the main PoW facility changed; the Union sacrificed its plan for humane treatment for a more practical resolution to the growing numbers of PoWs (Fig. 4.1).

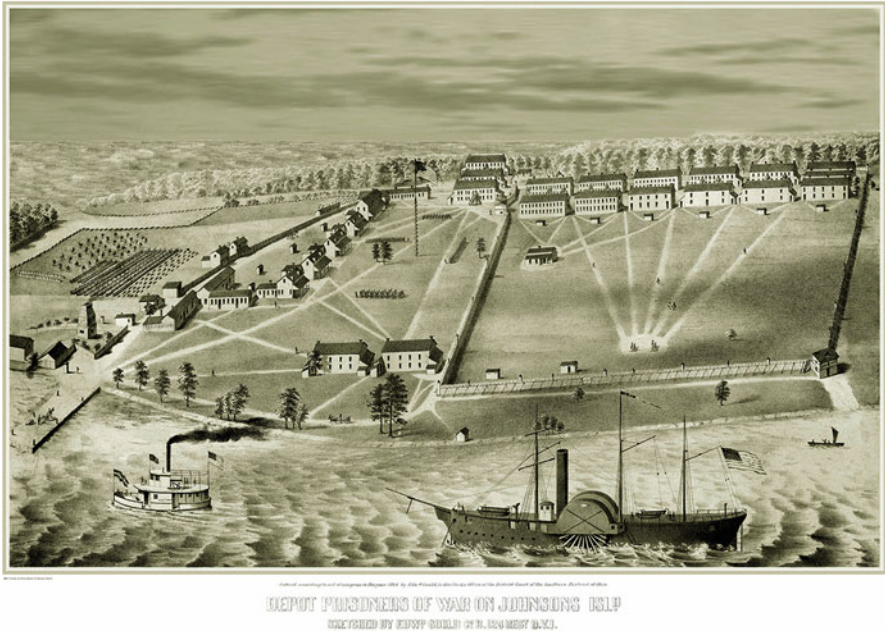


Fig. 4.1 “Depot Prisoners of War on Johnson’s Island” by Edward Gould. (Courtesy the Friends and Descendants of Johnson’s Island Civil War Prison.)

Johnson’s Island Prison Design

The location of the Union’s prison on Johnson’s Island met one of the major military concerns, that of protection. Surrounded by water meant escaping prisoners would have more difficulty making good on their unannounced departure. Even prisoners finding themselves on the outside of the stockade wall still needed a means to get off the island and onto the mainland. The island also served as protection from invading forces attempting to free the prisoners. Located so far north, and not within any major city or along easily accessed rail lines resulted in fewer guard and support facilities being required. Thus, from a military perspective, the selection of Johnson’s Island was almost ideal for the placement of a military depot for captured Confederates.

The Union did not want the prisoners to have unlimited access to the entire island, even though it was only 300 acres. They designed a facility to house both officers and enlisted men within a stockade, providing housing considered fit for both classes of military personnel. Unlike fortifications constructed to protect the occupants inside, this stockade was designed to serve the Union guard’s need to keep close watch on the captives (Hunter 1971:27). A 15-foot wall was constructed around the prison compound with a sentinel walk on the outside, allowing the guard a constant view of the captured occupants. The first four blocks nearest the main gate were constructed to house officers, and the next four to house the enlisted men. The officer

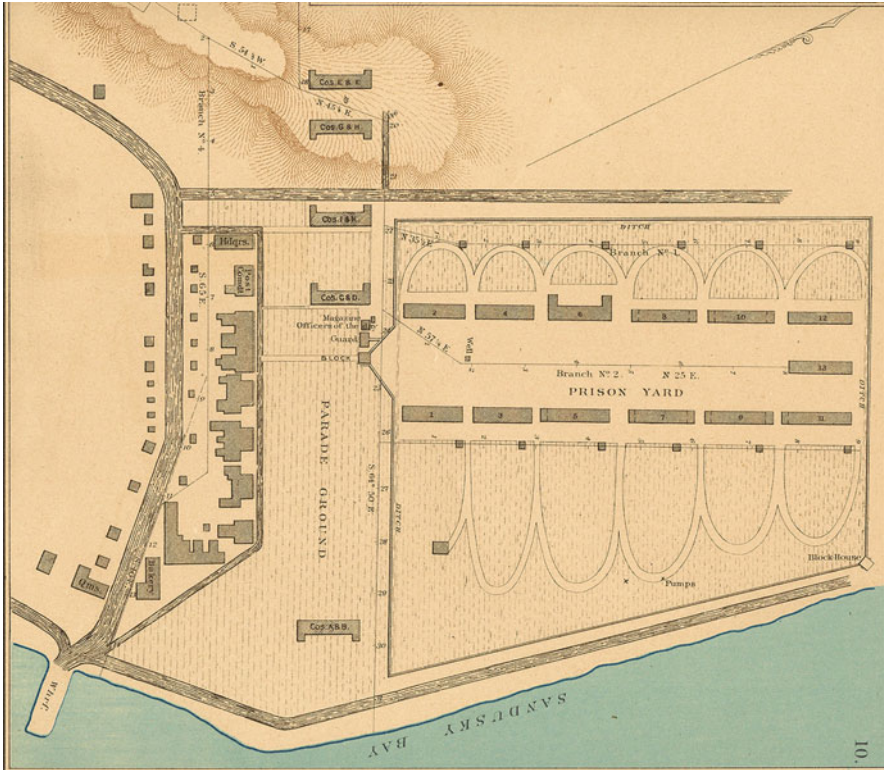


Fig. 4.2 U.S. War Department, Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington D.C., 1891), 66 (Courtesy the Friends and Descendants of Johnson's Island Civil War Prison.)

blocks were divided into 22 rooms each, resulting in prisoners in those blocks having fewer roommates. Eventually, five more barracks were constructed to much the same design as the enlisted blocks, resulting in a total of 12 housing barracks and one hospital within the prison compound. Barracks for the enlisted men were divided into three large rooms per floor. These rooms could accommodate as many as 60 prisoners. Sinks (the latrines) were placed behind each building in the two rows of barracks. The rows of blocks were positioned off-center, closer to the western portion of the prison compound, affording the guards an opportunity to view prisoners approaching the stockade wall on the bay side of the camp (Fig. 4.2).

The Union had chosen the southeast side of the island to place the prison complex to avoid the worst of the winter weather. They constructed each prisoner housing block with both cooking and heating stoves vented by brick chimneys. Each block had at least two mess rooms. Bunks, tables, benches, and utensils furnished each quarters. Rations provided to the prisoners were reported to be the same as that of the guard, both in quantity and quality (ORA, Series II, Vol. VI:759–760).

The Johnson's Island Military prison never operated as it was originally designed. The day the first prisoners arrived (April 10, 1862) at Johnson's Island was the day

that Quartermaster General Meigs made the suggestion to Lieutenant Colonel Hoffman that Johnson's Island be used to house officers only (ORA, Series II, Vol. III, p. 439). Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton communicated to Lieutenant Colonel Hoffman 3 days later that the Johnson's Island prison depot would serve only as an officers' prison (ORA, Series II, Vol. III, p.448). Prisoners arriving at the Johnson's Island depot discovered some accommodations within the prison walls were better suited for their comfort. This inevitably created some tension between prisoners, particularly those who felt that their rank was not being adequately honored. Private Thomas C. Skinner, 8th Kentucky Infantry, who was transferred from Camp Chase, Columbus, Ohio wrote to his father on April 15, 1862 just days after his arrival, "We are in very comfortable quarters only four in a room. The houses are two storys [sic] high large windows and are plenty nice for soldiers" (Skinner 1862). Even though he came with the first prisoners, he ended up housed in one of the officers' barracks. After their arrival, no attempt was made to segregate the officers from the enlisted until the enlisted were shipped back to Camp Chase. From a slightly different perspective, Captain John H. Guy, Virginia Artillery, wrote in his diary on April 29th, 1862:

The prisons are quartered in eight large buildings. Four of these were built for officers and four for privates. Those built for officers are divided into small rooms, with a cooking room and a dining room to every eight rooms. The rooms are occupied by 5 persons, so that, 40 use the same cooking and dining rooms. Those quartered in these four buildings are very comfortably fixed. These four buildings intended for privates are divided into six large rooms which are occupied by from 30 to 60 prisons each. The occupants are divided into two large messes and for cooking have each the use of a cook room attached one to one end and another to the outer end of the main building. They have no separate dining room. They are so crowded in these four buildings that it is very disagreeable.

Strangers from all parts of the country are huddled promiscuously together; and many of them are very far from being pleasant companions although officers. For these four buildings are now occupied by officers. Those who were first brought on from Camp Chase filled the officer's quarters and we who happened to come last find ourselves in miserable buildings (Guy 1862).

These accounts attest to the disparity caused by the Union's decision to build a facility for two classes of military personnel but then only house officers. Expectations early in the use of Johnson's Island certainly included subdivisions by rank. However, transforming Johnson's Island to an officer's-only facility forced most higher ranking soldiers to reside in what they considered substandard housing.

The Changing Landscape

The early decision of the Union to convert Johnson's Island to an officer's-only prison signaled the first compromise the Union would make on appropriate treatment. Only 3 days into its operation, Johnson's Island reflected the Union's unsettled approach to PoW treatment through its designation as an officer's-only prisoner

depot. From the Union's perspective, keeping all the Confederate officers in one prison was effective in separating captured officers from enlisted, lessening the chance for organized insurrections. With the growing numbers of prisoners, incarcerating officers on Johnson's Island would insure their remaining in captivity until "officially" exchanged. The result was Confederate officers housed in accommodations originally constructed for non-officer personnel. The Official Records do not contain any references to the Union sensing a dilemma in this approach, but it may have been a subtle way of recognizing the ambiguity afforded these noncitizens. The fact some officers were housed in more appropriate quarters did not go unnoticed by those who were not (ORA 1880–1901).

As the Union and Confederacy struggled with creating a cartel, numbers increased within the prison compounds. After the cartel was agreed upon in July 1862, the prisoner exchange began to lessen the anxiety prisoners experienced. After September 1862, the numbers at the Johnson's Island prison were halved as prisoners were transferred to Vicksburg for exchange. With modest additions, another transfer in November 1862 resulted in fewer than 350 prisoners occupying Johnson's Island until July 1863 (NAGRP 1865).

Regrettably, in May of 1863 the exchange system for officers was formally suspended (Bush 2011:33). The North wished to retain captured officers to insure their captured officers in the South were treated fairly. There continued to be problems with the South's treatment of captured Negro troops and the officers that commanded them. The South, feeling the strain of taking care of more and more prisoners, made overtures to the North to allow necessary medical and food supplies into Southern prisons which the North did not actively pursue.

The atmosphere in 1863 was ripe for retaliatory actions. William Hoffman, Commissary General of Prisoners, writes of concern on April 17th about the treatment of Union prisoners in Richmond, "it has frequently happened that they have been stripped of all their outer garments and then crowded into prisons inconceivably filthy, so much so that it would be shocking to humanity to confine in such a place even the most abandoned criminals" (ORA, Series II, Vol. V, p.487). Accusations of Northern prisoners mistreated in Southern prisons forced the Union administration to act. As evidence in this struggle to define the appropriate actions for troops in the field, Lincoln signed a document entitled "Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field, General Order No. 100," also known as the Lieber Code, on April 24, 1863. The code, mirroring the times, was contradictory in its treatment of PoWs. It states revenge cannot be imposed upon the prisoner through means of suffering, cruel imprisonment or lack of food, yet at the same time it allows for prisoners to be "liable to the infliction of retaliatory measures." Lincoln, on July 30, 1863, published an Order of Retaliation, clarifying what retaliatory means. It states in part:

It is therefore ordered that for every soldier of the United States killed in violation of the laws of war, a rebel soldier shall be executed; and for every one enslaved by the enemy or sold into slavery, a rebel soldier shall be placed at hard labor on the public works and continued at such labor until the other shall be released and received the treatment due to a prisoner of war (ORA, Series III, Vol. III, pp148-164).

Retaliatory accusations abound in the Official Records throughout 1863 and early 1864. The reality was that all PoWs suffered in response to these claims. By early 1864 Colonel William Hoffman had lost sight of his earlier view of prisoner treatment. He states in a letter to E. M. Stanton, Secretary of War

I respectfully suggest as a means of compelling the rebels to adopt a less barbarous policy toward the prisoners in their hands that the rebel officers at Johnson's Island be allowed only half-rations; that their clothing be reduced to what is only sufficient to cover their nakedness, and that they be denied the privilege of purchasing the articles allowed to other prisoners (ORA, Series II, Vol. VII, pp80-81).

Even though General Order No. 100 stated specifically, "A prisoner of war is subject to no punishment for being a public enemy, nor is any revenge wreaked upon him by the intentional infliction of any suffering, or disgrace, by cruel imprisonment, want of food, by mutilation, death, or any other barbarity" the Union did exactly that. They made the decision to cut rations, provide substandard food, cut access to previously allowed personal items, restrict various forms of communication with the outside and, instead of building new facilities, just used the existing ones with overcrowding becoming the norm. Thus, the idea of humanely treating the increasing numbers of PoWs was now compromised. With changing directives coming out of the War Department and the Commissary General of Prisoners, each prison facility's commander assumed a certain amount of latitude in how to interpret the orders.

In reading thousands of pages of accounts of prisoner treatment, both from official reports and personal journals, one thing was perfectly clear: everyone seemed to suffer. Once the accusations started, there was little attempt to rectify any mistreatment and more effort made for counter-accusations. The bureaucrats may have been jockeying for their version of the truth, but there is no denying all prisoners suffered from the mistreatment on both sides.

The Archaeology of Prison Design

The rationale for a long-term archaeological program comes through a contextual understanding of the construction, design, and use of Johnson's Island. Johnson's Island's changing response to the Union's directives is identified and explored archaeologically. This major effort has provided archaeological evidence for the initial prison design and the discovery and documentation of the material and behavioral implications of changes in PoW treatment policy.

The Johnson's Island Civil War Prison provides a setting to explore the ideal prison design from an anthropological/archaeological and historical perspective. The existence of the immense historical record for this prison, derived from both those incarcerated as well as the guard, is unique in quantity and quality among any American Civil War prison, North or South. The multivocal nature of this resource allows development of a less biased response to the changing conditions, avoiding or at least contextualizing fringe reactions (Bush 2011). The historical record frames what prisoners encountered as they walked through the 15-foot high gates to the

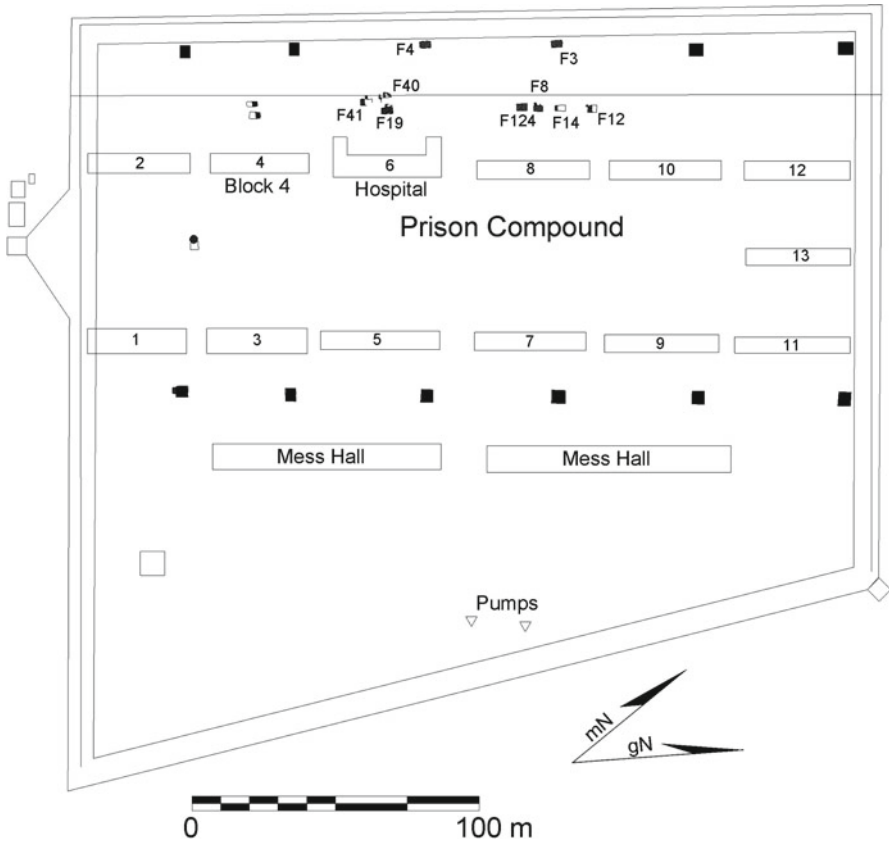


Fig. 4.3 Map of the archaeological investigations

“bull pen.” The path that prisoners followed was laid down in the first months when the prison was opened in 1862. Those whose lives had already been changed by incarceration guided newly arriving prisoners (Bush 2011:34).

The archaeological investigation of the Johnson’s Island prison began in 1988 to determine its location and integrity (Bush 1990). In 1866 the Union had auctioned off all remaining structures and contents of the prison and returned control of the island to Mr. Johnson (Frohman 1965). A limestone quarry dug in the late nineteenth century then removed a portion of the center of the island, destroying the archaeological remains associated with the prison guard. The only remaining above ground wooden construction from the prison, a guard’s blockhouse, had completely disappeared by 1939. A 1950s housing development created single-family lots along the perimeter of the island, resulting in a variety of mostly summer residences. Connection of the island to the Marblehead Peninsula in 1972 resulted in easy access to the island, greatly increasing construction of single-family dwellings. Fortunately, the interior of the island remained undeveloped and secondary forests occupied all lands not built upon (Fig. 4.3).

With the basic prison design determined in a cursory historical overview, the objective in 1988 was to locate what remained of the prison complex on the island. The prison expansion in July 1864 to accommodate more Confederate officers included a ditch excavated along the interior of the prison wall to prevent tunneling by prisoners (Bush 2000:67). This prison feature served as the most efficient means to locate the prison. Subsequent to plotting out the ditch, investigations commenced on locating three latrines noted on a 1864 Union map prepared by George Morton, US Army Civil Engineers Office (ORA, 1880–1901, 7:488). Latrines (known as sinks) illustrated on the 1864 map behind each of the western six prisoner blocks were in use from July 12, 1864 until their replacement in November 1864. The archaeological discovery of these three latrines in the precise location noted on the Union's 1864 map allowed the long-term study of these short-lived latrines behind each of the prisoner blocks (Bush 2000).

The next challenge was to locate the latrines along the earlier 1862–1864 western wall. The prison expansion of 100 feet to the west in July 1864 allowed the Union to enforce a broader deadline of 30 feet; the deadline associated with the initial wall was only 10 feet wide. The search for the earlier latrines commenced with plotting out the original wall, based upon historical records of the prison expansion (Bush 2000:66–67). The challenge for these earlier latrines, once located, was to determine their chronological placement; once this was accomplished, further interpretation of prisoner conditions was possible (Bush 2000).

The initial design of the prison compound included housing both Confederate officers and enlisted men, resulting in two basic housing unit plans. Blocks 1–4 were for officers, and Blocks 5–13 for the enlisted men. The only exception was Block 6, the prison hospital, with a unique design. Additionally, the historical record provides information on special activities occurring within the residential blocks including a clandestine photographic studio in the attic of Block 4 and a theatrical stage in Block 8 (Smith 1864).

Over the period 2002–2005, excavations at Johnson's Island centered on the location of the Block 4 structure and two of the latrines along the early western wall. The emphasis was to collect data on a general housing block designed for officers. Block 4 was 117 feet long and 29 feet wide. The building, of wood construction and two-stories high, was divided into 22 rooms, allowing officers to have only three or four roommates. Excavations unearthed approximately 50 % of Block 4 along with the area between the blocks and the latrines. Potential destruction from the housing development pushed the excavation of the power magazine of Fort Hill into the 2003 field season, cutting short explorations of Block 4.

Excavations focused on Block 6 and two of the associated latrines behind the prison hospital during 2006–2009. This allowed a comparison between Blocks 4 and 6, a general housing block and the prison hospital (Bush 2007). The Block 6 excavations revealed an area comparable to that exposed in Block 4, allowing for effective comparison. For example, the personal items recovered from both blocks could be compared; Block 4 produced more personal and clothing items than were recovered in Block 6, though pipe smoking artifacts were prevalent in both blocks (Fig. 4.4).

Craft materials (hard rubber, cut shell, gold, silver, and copper) were generally absent from the hospital block. Prisoners sent to the hospital were typically quite

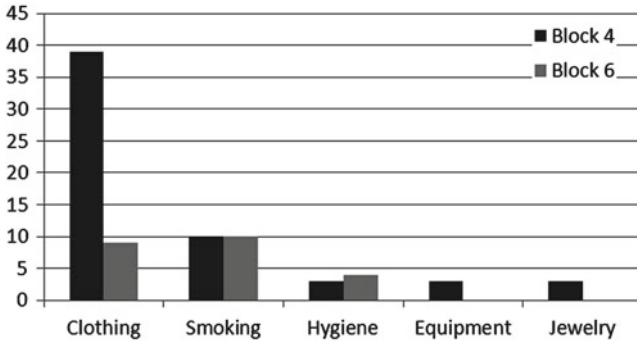


Fig. 4.4 Numbers of personal items recovered from Blocks 4 and 6, by category

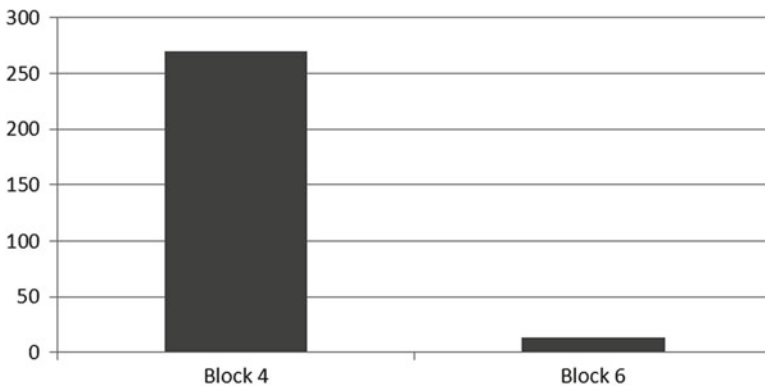


Fig. 4.5 Numbers of artefacts related to craft use recovered from Blocks 4 and 6

sick, for many prisoners complained of being ill but were not admitted. Prisoners staying in the hospital would have had restricted mobility and could not have been involved in either daily personal maintenance activities or working on jewelry and other craft items. Items lost through the floorboards and recovered through the archaeological investigations reflect the use of Block 6 as the hospital and not for activities like carving jewelry, as demonstrated for Block 4 (Fig. 4.5).

Johnson’s Island was known for the production of “gutta percha” jewelry as early as the summer of 1862. Captain John H Guy noted in his July 28, 1862 diary entry, “Ring making rules the hour. Among over a thousand prisoners, more than half have employed most of their time making rings out of gutton [sic] percha buttons.” (Guy 1862) The interest and demand for hard rubber items continued until the war ended. Colonel Virgil S. Murphy wrote in his diary on January 27, 1865:

I wrote my wife and sent her a beautiful cross and mother a ring manufactured in prison. They will be objects of curiosity and precious relics some day in the distant future, when our sufferings are appreciated and our sacrifices acknowledged. It was all the token I had to send my loved ones, in value worthless but in sentiment and remembrance much (Murphy 1865).

Fig. 4.6 Hard rubber cross discovered at Block 4 (length 18.7 mm)



On March 2, 1865, Captain Wesley Makely states in a letter to his wife, “Kate I have not got the things made yet that I spoke of sending you some time ago. There is a great demand here for gutapercha [sic] jewelry, as most every body is trying to get some to carry south with them” (Bush 2011:201; Makely Family Papers 1863). Throughout the occupation of Johnson’s Island, the prisoners identified hard rubber as gutta-percha. Prisoners were mainly carving hard rubber buttons and writing rules into very fashionable pieces of jewelry. Finger rings were most popular, followed by breast pins, necklaces, trinkets (fish and acorns), crosses, stars, and many other forms (Bush 1992). Often these pieces of jewelry would have insets of silver, gold, copper, and freshwater or marine shell. They could acquire these materials from the sutler or through friends and family. The large amounts of hard rubber, varying from waste pieces through to finished items attest to the occupants of Block 4 being heavily involved in jewelry making. At Elmira in New York, the making of bone trinkets was a source of income for the prisoners (Gray 2001), as it had been for American and French soldiers and sailors in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (see Chapters 1 and 5). Although the finest jewelers at Johnson’s Island no doubt profited from their work, the majority wished to acquire pieces to send to family and friends as a reminder of their plight (Bush 2009:167) (Fig. 4.6).

The field seasons of 2010 and 2011 have concentrated on initial exploration of Block 8, a general housing block used for officers but designed for the enlisted men. Unlike Block 4, this building was only 24 feet wide and 130 feet long. Instead of each floor divided into 11 rooms, the floors in the “enlisted” blocks were divided into three large rooms, accommodating up to 60 prisoners. Added to the northern and southern ends of Block 8 was a single-story lean-to structure, used for the preparation of meals. After several more years of exploring Block 8, a comparison of Blocks 4 and 8 should reveal how these differently designed structures potentially altered the activities of the prisoners held in them. For instance, the more intimate setting of the “officer” blocks should reveal greater concentrations of contraband items, which would have been harder to conceal in the larger dormitory-style rooms.

Conclusions

Prisoners at Johnson’s Island survived their disillusionment in the expectation of exchange and the imposition of retaliatory treatment through mechanisms to regain limited control of their lives. The multitude of primary accounts of the prisoner experience allows the biased nature of any single personal account to be minimized. Prisoners arrived at Johnson’s Island with an expectation of exchange but soon realized their real choices were either to attempt an escape or manage survival. With less than 0.2 % successful in escaping, survival was the only viable option. How a prisoner was able to handle survival would be dependent upon what they could bring to the prison and what the prison offered or took away.

The integrity of the archaeological resources allows both spatial and chronological segregation of the cultural materials (Bush 2000). The ability to examine the remains fallen through the floorboards of the various blocks allows for spatial-use studies. The excavations of Blocks 4 (a general housing block) and 6 (the hospital) have uncovered significantly different types of cultural materials, an example being the results of jewelry making. Further work on Block 8 will allow exploration of the ways in which block design altered the activities available to prisoners, contrasting behavior in smaller, intimate rooms with that of a larger, dormitory-style setting.

The design of Johnson’s Island’s prison compound facilitates exploration of the chronological treatment of the prisoners through the careful study of the latrines associated with each of the housing blocks. Behind each block was a latrine serving that block for a limited time. The excavation of the latrines behind Blocks 4, 6, and 8 continues to provide a chronologically sensitive perspective on PoW treatment (Bush 2000, 2009).

From the historical and archaeological records, we find the PoWs at Johnson’s Island realized they had the ability to endure their imprisonment without being totally oppressed by the guards. The writings left behind and the cultural materials contained in the ground demonstrate that prisoners had achieved some control over their imprisonment. The prewar social position of many prisoners enabled them to have access to funds used to purchase the goods and services needed to sustain a

tolerable existence. Many prisoners, utilizing their training or skills, provided a range of services. Operating as dentists, jewelers, photographers, or even librarians, they could obtain funds to better their existence. Prisoners had the opportunity to recapture some of their lost identity with minor impact to the guards' overall mandate of incarceration (Bush 2009).

The combination of the multivocal nature of the historic record coupled with the chronologically and spatially discrete archaeological resource provides the ingredients for this long-term, in-depth study of PoW treatment during the American Civil War. The initial design of the prison for all captured soldiers is the baseline upon which changing policy is reflected in a physically altered prison complex. The implications of these policy changes appear through the impacts they have on the use of Johnson's Island. As the Union deviates from its original mandate for humane prisoner treatment, housing assignments are changed, the deadline space in front of the stockade is widened, harsh rationing is imposed, sutler-provided dietary supplements are limited, access to clothing becomes restricted, and overcrowding is deliberately created. The archaeological and historical records document this physically changing prison landscape and the inhumanity it represents.

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