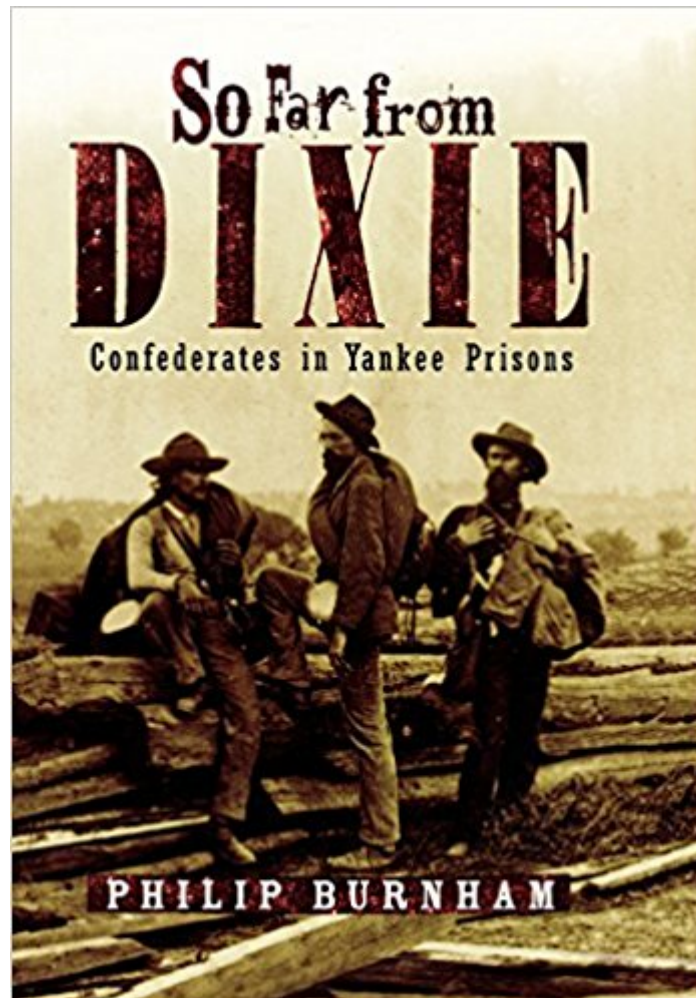




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So Far From Dixie: Confederates In Yankee Prisons



Synopsis

Across the North, 26,000 Rebels died in what was called "Yankee captivity"—six times the number of Confederate dead listed for the battle of Gettysburg, and twice that for the Southern dead of Antietam, Chickamauga, Chancellorsville, Seven Days, Shiloh, and Second Manassas combined. "If there was ever a hell on earth," one Confederate veteran remembered, "Elmira prison was that hell." New York's POW camp—nicknamed "Helmira"—was the most infamous of Northern prisons during the Civil War, places where hunger, brutality, and disease were everyday hazards. *So Far from Dixie* is the gripping narrative history of five men who were sent to Elmira and survived to document their stories. Berry Benson promised that he would escape the prison under honorable circumstances. Anthony Keiley charmed Union authorities into giving him a job at Elmira and later became mayor of Richmond, Virginia. John King refused to build coffins for his fellow prisoners. Marcus Toney disdained to take the Union oath of loyalty until long after the war had ended. And Frank Wilkenson, a Union army volunteer only fifteen years old, endured the same humiliating punishments meted out to the prisoners he was guarding.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Burnham weaves the fates of four Confederate prisoners into a seamless, illustrated narrative. (Barrett R. Richardson *Virginian-Pilot*) The book is a bargain for its targeted audience. It provides excellent primary source information from a wide variety of manuscript collections and collections of individual letters. (Richard J. Blumberg *Civil War News*) Burnham paints a macabre scene of a mixture of events from the Civil War, or more accurately, The War Between the States. He stirs

together a mess of humanity in the boiling cauldrons of Southern battlefields and Northern prison camps. (Bill Ward Salisbury Post)

Philip Burnham, author of *How the Other Half Lived: A People's Guide to American Historic Sites* (ISBN 0571198627), lives in Washington, D.C.

My husband loves to read!

Very interesting story of the experiences of several Confederate soldiers who were imprisoned during the Civil War. It was fascinating to learn about the entire lives of these POWs as opposed to just learning about isolated events. I highly recommend this book as well as another of the author's books *SONG OF DEWEY BEARD*.

My reason for purchasing this book is my ggg grandfather spent 4 years in 5 Union Prisons, the last being Point Lookout, Maryland where he died a couple of weeks before the war ended. I am very interested in knowing how his last four years of his life was lived. He was 24 when he enlisted in the Confederate Army in Tennessee and was 28 years old at his death. The book's main focus is the Northern Prisons for the Confederate Soldiers.

Very informative. My Great grandfather John Mitchell Goodwin was held at Elmira. He never really recovered and died after 10 years of being home.

Good book

This is quite possibly the best book on Elmira prison camp (known as "Hell-mira" by its occupants) that there is, period. It is a fascinating look at the conversion of the camp from a Union training camp to a prison for Confederate POW's. Elmira rivalled notorious southern cousins such as Andersonville for its deprivation and its death rate, yet often is given no attention in studies or overviews of the civil war or its prisons. Through the use of several prisoner memoirs and camp records, the author pieces together a very interesting and highly detailed picture of what life was like upon capture, transportation to earlier prisons that functioned like "holding pens", and within the Elmira itself. While Elmira was only open from about July 1864 through the end of the war, sufficient documentation existed to tell its story in lifelike detail, and this the author does brilliantly. The

average conditions of the camp, such as the evolution of a black market and medium of exchange, are told here, as well as high points, such as escapes, and low points, such as flood and epidemic. The author does a brilliant job of telling Elmira's story from several inmate viewpoints - the literate gentleman, the mountain rebel, the veteran, those who escaped, those who stayed, and even a brief bit from the Yankee guards. I loved this book and have read it several times. If you are looking for a book that will tell you what it was like in a civil war POW camp, this is a good choice. The number and types of letters that could be sent in and out of the camp, the frequency and ingredients of camp rations, how much tobacco could be purchased for a rat, the layout of barracks and who slept where, opportunities for making money, and other great details are here, right down to the distinguishing marks on camp-issued overcoats. I cannot recommend this book enough.

My great-grandfather, Charles Slavens Cooper, was a confederate prisoner at Elmira in New York state, which explained my interest in this book. The book is well written and held my riveted attention for 2-3 days to complete reading it. Prison hardships, tales of escapes, and war experiences make this book a lively read. It is well documented with extensive endnotes and bibliography. There are 16 pages of photos. The first confederate soldiers arrived at this prison July 6, 1864 and the war ended less than one year later. During that time, almost 10,000 confederates were held there, in a place designed for about 1/3 that number. Conditions were horrible. Many died from the cold, lack of good nutrition, rat and mosquito born diseases, and poor hygienic conditions. The local cemetery contains about 3,000 grave markers for confederate prisoners. By the way, I also had a great-great-grandfather fight on the side of the North. Fortunately he avoided capture and did not have to spend any time at the notorious Andersonville prison in Georgia.

I really enjoyed this book. The author keeps you on the edge of your seat while talking of the Rebel's attempting to escape from prison. The book is a real easy read and personally I had trouble putting it down. I highly recommend this book.

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