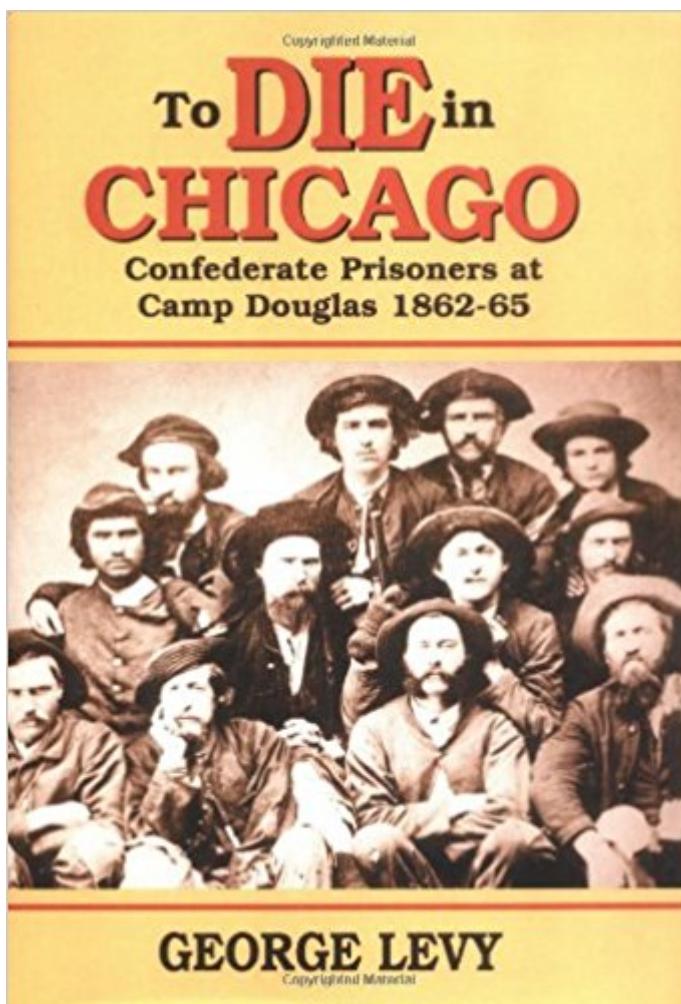


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To Die In Chicago: Confederate Prisoners At Camp Douglas, 1862-65



Synopsis

“Did Wirtz, the commandant of Andersonville prison, ever do anything as inhumanly brutal as was inflicted on Confederate prisoners in Camp Douglas?” •Sgt. T. B. Clore, Camp Douglas survivor The Chicago doctors who inspected the prison in 1863 called Camp Douglas an “extermination camp.” It quickly became the largest Confederate burial ground outside of the South. What George Levy’s meticulous research, including newly discovered hospital records, has uncovered is not a pretty picture. The story of Camp Douglas is one of brutal guards, deliberate starvation of prisoners, neglect of the sick, sadistic torture, murder, corruption at all levels, and a beef scandal reaching into the White House. As a result of the overcrowding and substandard provisions, disease ran rampant and the mortality rate soared. By the thousands, prisoners needlessly died of pneumonia, smallpox, and other maladies. Most were buried in unmarked mass graves. The exact number of those who died is impossible to discern because of the Union’s haphazard recordkeeping and general disregard for the deceased. Among the most shocking revelations are such forms of torture as hanging prisoners by their thumbs, hanging them by their heels and then whipping them, and forcing prisoners to sit with their exposed buttocks in the ice and snow. The Confederate Camp Andersonville never saw such gratuitous barbarity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“In this volume, Mr. Levy has done an excellent job of telling the story of Camp Douglas from its creation until the day it was abandoned.” •Civil War News “Levy

seeks from the beginning to provide an explanation for the human misery that was so prevalent in the Union's military prison, and by drawing on a wealth of primary and secondary sources, he succeeds in that attempt.

The mere mention of the word "Andersonville" elicits feelings of anger and resentment concerning the Confederate prison camp, while "Camp Douglas" in Chicago causes many citizens, even some Civil War buffs, mere confusion. However, the atrocities that occurred in that Union prison camp were even more heinous than those at Andersonville.

To Die in Chicago: Confederate Prisoners at Camp Douglas 1862-65 is the first book to delve into the murky waters surrounding what was to become the largest Confederate burial ground outside of the South. One prisoner lamented, "I wondered what caused all of this fearful mortality. . . . Was it starvation, neglect, and cruelty? God alone knows." In fact, all three contributed to the demise of thousands, many of whom died from diseases including pneumonia, dysentery, and small pox. The exact number of prisoners buried at Camp Douglas remains unknown. Haphazard recordkeeping and a general disregard for the deceased make counting the dead an impossible task, despite the author's fastidious research, which includes new hospital records found in the National Archives.

Compounding the difficulty, most were buried in unmarked mass graves. What is known is that the camp was originally built in 1861 as a Union recruiting and training depot, designed to house approximately 8,000 troops. The first prisoners arrived the following year. By December 1864, the number of inmates swelled to 12,082. Surmounting the overcrowding, mistreatment, and abominable living conditions, some prisoners, including T. M. Page, survived. Of this group, he said, "no body of men was ever more tried in any ordeal which tests human nature and proves it credible to mankind." Now their story, and the story of those who died in Chicago, may be told. George Levy, retired professor of legal studies at Roosevelt University and lawyer, became interested in Camp Douglas as a student at the University of Chicago, which is located across the street from the site of the camp. Levy has served in the Public Defender's office and as an assistant attorney general for the state of Illinois.

"In the 130-plus years since the Civil War, only a handful of historians have attempted to tackle the exhaustive research and scholarly documentation required in the proper study of its major POW facilities. *To Die in Chicago* is a great, welcomed addition to those few specialized works. George Levy has created the definitive analysis of the Camp Douglas prison camp--one of the Union's most important."--Lonnie R. Speer, author, *Portals to Hell: The Military Prisons of the Civil War*"Not only an exhaustive and detailed study of the largest of Union prison camps, but also a dispassionate

expose of the purposeful brutality practiced by the Federal government. The tragedy of the much publicized prison at Andersonville was that a war weary Confederate government could not feed, clothe or provide medical care for its own people, much less enemy prisoners. The shame of Camp Douglas and other Northern prisons was that the Union government could have provided for their Confederate prisoners, but didn't. To Die in Chicago is a must read for any student of the supposed 'Civil' war."--Dr. John McGlone, editor, Journal of Confederate History

I guess it all comes down to the fact that the Victors Write History. I grew up in Chicago and had never heard anyone make mention of Camp Douglas. I even asked several others I knew who grew up in various parts of Chicago and they had not heard of Camp Douglas, either. Yet, we all learned about Andersonville. I have since gone to Oaklawn Cemetery on Chicago's South Side (Hyde Park) to see the monument and grave sites. Whodathunk!?! The most disheartening thing I learned from reading the book, and there were many disheartening things, is that Lincoln knew and was aware of Camp Douglas. All told, the book is indeed an eyeopener that only confirms something, that sadly, I've believed for a long time: Hobbes Lives.

My relative was a 1st Lt. in the 90 th Illinois regiment and they performed guard duty there briefly from Sept.1862 - December 1862 and then they were shipped down to Tennessee and Mississippi. They guarded Confederates briefly for about a month and the confederates left and then Paroled Union soldiers filled the camp. This was before the real brutality started. I watched 80 acres of Hell on the History channel and was really impressed with George Levy's presentation and I bought his book. Haven't read it yet but the reviews indicate it's a really good book. I never knew my relative served in Camp Douglas doing guard duty , it's all new to me. Hopefully this book will fill in the details and I'll learn more about my relatives Civil war service.

I can't tell you how many times I have gone back to this book to better understand the "big picture" of the US Civil War. So much propaganda that vilifies the South lives on, but the lesser known negative truths about the Northern atrocities have been shuffled to the side. This book does not take sides or place blame, but it lets the reader understand the facts and make an informed decision for themselves. Meticulous research is presented in a clear and concise format that makes this book an essential reference book for anyone interested in the subject.

Excellent history! Well written, factual, interesting. I bought it because of reference I discovered

while working on genealogy. Decided to check the footnotes and bibliography for accuracy. Have not discovered any problems. Material quoted is correctly quoted; that which is paraphased is likewise correct. This is a history that every history teacher should be using in the classroom when talking about the Civil War.

I bought the book because my great grandfather, George Dickey Armstrong, died there. It is recorded on page 72. I have a copy of the letter that the prison chaplain sent to my great grandmother. I have put it in digital form so if George Levy or anyone else would like to read it, I can oblige' Spence M. Armstrong

I bought this book for my husband for Xmas. He loved it. His great, great, grandfather was at camp Douglas during the Civil War and there had only been a mere mention of it in his family. The book came in a timely fashion and was in great condition

Great book! I absolutely love it. Wonderful quality!

Still reading it. Learned what conditions were like where my Grandfathers brother died as a POW.

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