



Camp Douglas News

Committed to the Preservation of Chicago History



Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation

Chicago, Illinois

Fall 2017

Volume 8, Issue 3

Project Phases:

Awareness and Support:
2010-2017

Site Planning: 2014-2017

Archaeological Investigation:
2012, 2013, 2014, 2015,
2016

Construction: 2018-2019

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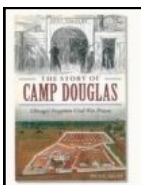
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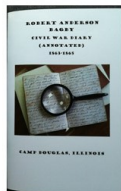
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Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation—Latest News

Chicago Approves Archaeological Digs

Thanks to the outstanding cooperation of the Chicago Department of Transportation, Michael C. Simon, Deputy Commissioner, CDRF, will be allowed to conduct a number of archaeological excavations in city parkways.

In response to comments by the State of Illinois regarding the CDRF's anticipated application for inclusion of the footprint of Camp Douglas on the National Register of Historic Places, additional archaeological excavations are needed. These excavations will provide further information to support the integrity of the site.



While it would have been desirable to investigate several open areas on the camp site, land owner, Draper and Kramer, continue to be uncooperative.

With the support of Alderman Sophia King and Alderman Ed Burke, the Department of Transportation approved our request to excavate several locations in parkways owned by the city. This grass area between the sidewalk and street will offer opportunities to provide archaeological evidence throughout the footprint of the camp.

We expect to begin excavations in the spring 2018.

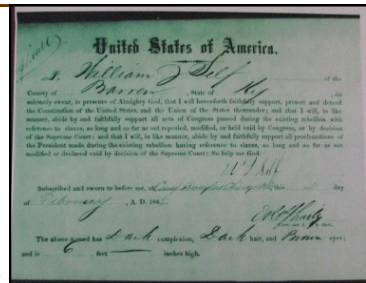
Pvt. William J. Self - 6th Kentucky Infantry

Maintaining contact with descendants of Camp Douglas prisoners offers the Foundation an excellent opportunity to increase our knowledge of Camp Douglas.

Lester Self of Lebanon, TN, is the great-grandson of William J. Self, Company C 6th Kentucky Mounted Infantry, "The Orphan Brigade."

Lester kindly shared with CDRF a number of documents relating to Private Self, including a Company Muster Roll, Special Order 33 from Camp Douglas, which indicated Pvt. Self took the oath of allegiance, and a copy of his oath. Also included was a photo the 6th Kentucky battle flag and a photo of W. J. Self's tombstone showing his birth as April 2, 1839 and death September 5, 1925. Unfortunately, there are no photographs available of Mr. Self.

Private Self joined the 6th Kentucky in



William Self
Oath of Allegiance

1861 and served with that unit until he was captured July 22, 1864 after being wounded at the battle of Peach Tree Creek. He was a prisoner at Camp Douglas in late July or early April 1864 until his release upon signing the Oath of Allegiance in February 2, 1865.

The sharing of this information is critical to the mission of the Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation. Our efforts to document prisoners and guards can be most successful with the help of descendants of these men

If you have information on guards or prisoners, please send copies to:

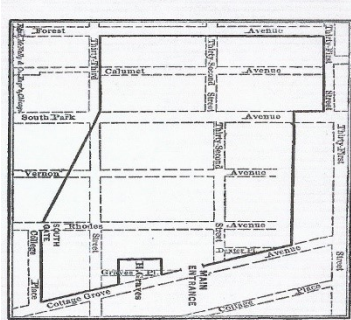
Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation
1368 N. Mohawk 2S
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or

Email David Keller at
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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

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Recent Visits at Other Union Prisons

CDRF Director Michael Gregory recently visited the Union prison camp in Elmira, NY, during the grand opening of their museum. The Friends of Elmira were instrumental in re-creating facilities of the camp which operated from July 1864 until September 1895. Elmira had the unenviable distinction of having the greatest mortality rate (24%) among Union prisons.

CDRF Managing Director David Keller recently visited Point Lookout, MD, and Fort Delaware, DE. Both facilities are part of the State Parks of Maryland. Fort Delaware is extremely well developed with the active support of local volunteers. The reconstruction of a prisoner barracks looks very similar to those at Camp Douglas. Point Lookout, by comparison, is largely forgotten with only a section of the stockade reconstructed. Fort Lincoln, adjacent to the prison camp, has been preserved.

All three of these locations are worthwhile visiting to get a feel of the Civil War

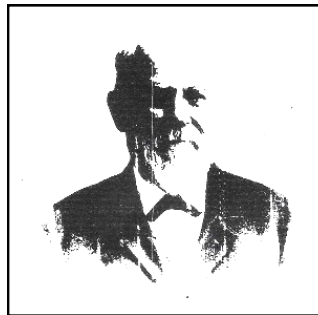
Robert Excell and His Observation Tower

Robert Excell was born in England January 17, 1824. After stays in Canada and New York City, he moved to Chicago in 1856 with his wife, Emily.

Trained as a carpenter supervisor, Mr. Excell was a contractor for a number of buildings in Chicago. Most were destroyed in the fire of 1871.

In 1858 he moved to Cleaverville (Lake Park and 37th Streets.) After several moves in the area, he built the first double-brick home on Cottage Grove Avenue at 39th Street..

At the beginning of the Civil War he was leased 16 square feet of ground just outside Camp Douglas near 32nd street. He and his son, Isaac built a tower 50 feet high reached by four flights of stairs open on all sides.



Robert Excell

Initially they charged ten cents per person to climb the tower and view the camp. After the building was completed, the charge was dropped to five cents. The first floor was a restaurant where soldiers could get a meal on credit.

Later in the war Mr. Excell received competition from a tower built on top of the hotel located across from the Camp Douglas' main gate on Cottage Grove.

One evening, Mr. Excell was cutting through the woods to his home when he observed some Confederate officers, on passes from the camp at the home of Charles Walsh on Ellis Avenue near 36th Street. He reported this to Colonel Sweet.

Colonel Sweet conducted a raid of the home and found an arsenal of weapons.

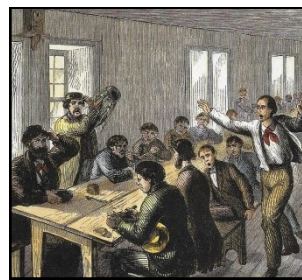
PTSD and the Civil War

The phrase Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was coined in 1980 by the American Psychiatric Association based on research involving returning Vietnam War veterans, Holocaust survivors, and others. Links between trauma of war and post-military civilian life were established, including rage, guilt, flashbacks, nightmares, depression, and emotional numbing.

In World War II, the World War I "shell shocked" diagnosis was replaced by Combat Stress Reaction (CSR), also known as "battle fatigue." The phrase shell shocked was used because medical authorities, at the time, believed the trauma was caused by the explosion of artillery shells.

The Civil War, along with the Franco-Prussian War, marked the start of formal medical attempts to address the problems of military veterans exposed to combat. Prior to that, Austrian physician Josef Leopold wrote about "nostalgia" among those exposed to military trauma. The symptoms he discussed were similar to PTSD including feeling sad, sleep problems, and anxiety.

Trauma resulting from the loss of limbs in battleground hospitals was accentuated by the inability of the veteran to return to the physical requirements of his pre-war job.



Men committed to Blackwell's Island, New York

Many former prisoners exhibited PTSD symptoms throughout their lives.

Quartermaster Sergeant Erastus Holmes, 5th Indiana Cavalry, left Andersonville prison weighing 80 pounds. After the war he was unable to sleep and ate obsessively and could not bear to see anything or anybody hungry. He

had a complete breakdown 20 years after the war and was admitted to the Indiana Hospital for the insane.

Ronald S. MacKenzie graduated first in the 1862 West Point class. After a distinguished career as a Brigadier General during the Civil War he spent 12 years in frontier service. Until suffering a nervous breakdown in 1881, after that his behavior became increasingly erratic with emotional highs and lows and unprovoked violent outbursts. He was diagnosed as having "paralysis of the insane" and medically retired to his relative's care.

Little was done after the war to address these PTSD veterans. Relegation to insane asylums was often the fate of the soldier who possessed any symptoms of military related stress.

This article is based on "The Shock of War," Ron Soodalter, *America's Civil War*, May 2017