

Journal entry for October 8th, 1916:

I suppose it is fitting that I should begin keeping a journal as I fear I will never be able to write another letter to my beloved father. But how ashamed I am I shall never be able to express in words! Captured by the Hun, at their mercy, it's the most disgraceful thing in the world ...

Just last Tuesday we were sent flying but it was an awful day and the clouds loomed large in the sky. We started off on a routine mission to intercept a Zeppelin, but due to the most accursed cloud cover I did not see how close to the ground I was and flew right above the German trenches. The shells came up by the hundreds and a piece of shrapnel must have pierced the engine because I started a nose dive almost immediately. How I survived I can not say, but here I am large as life, for the moment at least...

At present I am waiting to be shifted to a concentration camp, but to where I do not know. The only thing I can say is that the Hun as proven to be quite an honorable race, they have shown me such respect you would not know we are at war.¹ I remain highly suspicious though...

Journal entry for October 14th, 1916:

I have arrived at a staging-center through which most captured officers pass before being sent on to other camps (so I am told).² I have seen more French, Belgian, Russian, and British soldiers in one day than in my entire life up until now. Damn the Hun! They bark orders and brandish their weapons like mad men. And who ever told them I understand a word they are saying? Hardly any of us do, and we often stare back blankly until either somebody translates or we are made to do something by a universally understood physical gesture³...

Like the others I am most eager to hear of any news concerning the war, though it is most doubtful that the slow pace will pick up anytime soon. Each nationality here has its own separate building, mine of course being the relatively small American quarters.⁴ I made a couple of acquaintances there, also both former pilots, named Blain and Dave, good fellows...

Journal entry for December 2nd, 1916:

On the move again, not sure where I am going. I rather enjoyed the quarantine camp, sorry I have to leave. Have to write quickly never know when they will start yelling at me again. Good thing Blain and Dave are still wit me, we decided to stick together for safety...

Journal entry for January 16th, 1917:

We reached our new "home" recently. We arrived by train, some city I whose name can't spell (Note: find out how later). Our destination, however, is a camp just outside of the city proper; we all call it the "citadel" because of its central tower.⁵ I imagined it would be like the place I just came from, the Hun quickly proved me wrong...

They hurry us, push us, and crowd us together into rooms. Upon arrival they forced us to strip naked and shower. They take away our old clothes and give us new ones. They also say they have orders shoot on sight anyone attempting to communicate with the outside world⁶...

Journal entry for March 22nd, 1917:

I have not been keeping up on my journal as often as I should be. How I loath this place! All they give us to eat is a very small quantity of dark, soggy bread, watery soups, very few vegetables, practically no meat, and coffee made from what tastes like chestnuts⁷. How we must live without the necessities of life I do not understand! I have lost so much weight...

The English prisoners receive extra supplies from some fancy agency in London. The French seem to get even more from their home country. The American Red Cross sometimes shows up to give us Americans what we need, but not often enough⁸...

Journal entry for May 16th, 1917:

He did, he finally did it! He just lost it and went insane! I told Blain something was wrong with Dave but we didn't believe me, told me it was nothing and he was just homesick. Now Dave is gone, they took him away, those damn Hun. It was the meager rationing and sexual deprivation that finally got to him I think, completely undermined his mental stability⁹...

One day he just wasn't Dave anymore, he lost all attachment to the world and started insulting the guards and charging the fences. He climbed a good ways up but the Germans took him down, gave him a good beating and hauled him away. We won't ever be seeing him again...

Journal entry for June 3rd, 1917:

Much has changed since Dave went crazy. Blain and I have spent more time together and come up with a plan that has given new meaning to life in my opinion. We saw how Dave had attempted in vain to scale the fences. Wouldn't it be nice to get to the other side and leave this terrible place! We think so and are forming a plan to make it happen. The best way would be to go underneath the fence¹⁰, we think, and so do some of the other prisoners we have begun to collude with. All preparations have been made, we have digging tools, a smuggled map of the immediate area outside the camp, and some peppers to throw off the scent of guard dogs¹¹...

Journal entry for June 26th, 1917:

Escape-fever is now virulent among the members of the working party. The tunnel stretches just far enough outside the camp to make for an unnoticeable emergence¹². We have clamped down of the members of the party, no one else is allowed to join, and nobody must breathe a word to anybody about the plans. If they knew I was writing this down they would kill me for sure! But I am so excited I can hardly keep my hands from shaking. Tomorrow night is the night, we will move swiftly and cautiously, one false move by one person could mean the death of us all. Blain tells me we are going to make it, I hope he is right! I feel as if my fate is out of hands, like it could be determined by the flip of a coin or the toss of a dice...

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- ¹ Malcolm V. Hay, *Wounded and a Prisoner of War* (Edinburgh: Blackwood Press, 1916), 167-168.
- ² Georges A. Connes, *A POW's Memoir of the First World War: The Other Ordeal* (Oxford: Berg Press, 2004), 67-68.
- ³ Georges A. Connes, *A POW's Memoir of the First World War: The Other Ordeal* (Oxford: Berg Press, 2004), 34-36.
- ⁴ Conrad Hoffman, *In the Prison Camps of Germany; a Narrative of "Y" Service among Prisoners of War* (New York: Association Press, 1920), 109.
- ⁵ Israel Cohen, *The Ruhleben Prison Camp: A Record of Nineteen Months' Internment* (London: Methuen & Company, 1917), 23.
- ⁶ John D. Ketchum, *Ruhleben: A Prison Camp Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 45-47.
- ⁷ "Treatment of prisoners in Germany," *The Nation* v.105, (Sept. 27, 1917): 335-336.
- ⁸ Carl P. Dennett, *Prisoners of the Great War: Authoritative Statement of Conditions in the Prison Camps of Germany* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919), 134.
- ⁹ Adolf L. Vischer, *Barbed Wire Disease: A Psychological Study of the Prisoner of War* (London: Bale & Danielsson Press, 1919), 43.
- ¹⁰ Barry Winchester, *Beyond the Tumult* (New York: Scribner Press, 1972), 85-86.
- ¹¹ Carl P. Dennett, *Prisoners of the Great War: Authoritative Statement of Conditions in the Prison Camps of Germany* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919), 56.
- ¹² Barry Winchester, *Beyond the Tumult* (New York: Scribner Press, 1972), 35-37.

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Secondary Sources:

Ketchum, John D. *Ruhleben: A Prison Camp Society*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965.

Pastor, Peter and Samuel R. Williamson, eds. *Essays on World War I: Origins and Prisoners of War*. Brooklyn: Brooklyn College Press, 1983.

Rachamimov, Alon. *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front*. Oxford: Berg Press, 2002.

Winchester, Barry. *Beyond the Tumult*. New York: Scribner Press, 1972.

Primary Sources:

"American Prisoners Exploited." *Current History* v.8, (June 1918): 484.

Cohen, Israel. *The Ruhleben Prison Camp: A Record of Nineteen Months' Internment*. London: Methuen & Company, 1917.

Connes, Georges A. *A POW's Memoir of the First World War: The Other Ordeal*. Oxford: Berg Press, 2004.

This is the best memoir of an actual prisoner serving in the German war camps of the First World War. It begins with his capture on the front by a Bavarian with a grenade and traces his long journey behind enemy lines until he reaches the camps in which he spends some of the worst years of his life. He not only recounts conditions in the camp but delves into feelings about the progress of the war and the joy of witnessing the German Revolution. Although the author is French, his words hold true for what any American would have experienced in his situation. The book was just recently translated, contains commentaries by specialists, and has several helpful and interesting endnotes.

Dennett, Carl P. *Prisoners of the Great War: Authoritative Statement of Conditions in the Prison Camps of Germany*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919.

This book offers the reader an example of the scholarly discourse dedicated to the topic of war prisoners just after the war in 1919. It is a more objective account of the conditions prisoners faced than the other primary sources, but still lacks the subsequent research that gives the more recent secondary sources their breadth of information. This book is thus useful as both a source of information about the prisons themselves and also about the research that was going on during that time. An in depth comparison with the secondary sources would probably reveal some interesting examples of what they did not know at the time, and what has subsequently been deemphasized by modern academics.

Gerard, James W. *My Four Years in Germany*. New York: George H. Doran Company, 1917.

Hay, Malcolm V. *Wounded and a Prisoner of War*. Edinburgh: Blackwood Press, 1916.

This book contains the writings of a French soldier captured during the Great War after suffering a major injury in the field. Thus he spends more time than talking about the medical aspects of prison life than any of the other accounts listed. It has great value in this respect because it reveals a completely different side of the topic and is very helpful in attaining knowledge of medical practices and institutions during this time. His writings are charged with emotion and expressions of the pain he suffered but also the gratitude that he had for the treatments which saved his life despite being an enemy of the Germans.

Hoffman, Conrad. *In the Prison Camps of Germany; a Narrative of "Y" Service among Prisoners of War*. New York: Association Press, 1920.

This memoir contains a rather unique perspective on prison camps in the Great War. It contains the thoughts and observations of an American who traveled to Germany in 1915, not as a soldier or prisoner, but as a member of a YMCA group performing relief work for British soldiers captured by the enemy. Over the course of his stay the author gains critical insight into the lives of the prisoners and thus communicates to the reader a view from the outside from someone who lacked direct experience of their trials. The book contains several images related to the war camps and his personal life.

Jones, Elias H. *The Road to En-Dor: Being an Account of how Two Prisoners of War at Yozgad in Turkey Won their Way to Freedom*. London: John Lane Press, 1919.

"Letters from a French Prisoner of War." *The North American Review* 208, no.753 (Aug. 1918): 204.

These letters from a Frenchman captured by the Germans reveal a great deal concerning prisoners of war in the First World War. The main reason they are valuable is precisely the lack of information about the daily life and conditions of the camp. They give a sense of what loved ones experienced knowing that their friend or family member was a prisoner and communicating with them from time to time. It also reveals both the type of information allowed to flow out of prison camps and goods allowed to flow into them. Furthermore the Frenchman writes eloquently and with an almost unreal optimism that is somewhat undermined by his frequent requests for food and dismay at not receiving the books his parents send him.

"Prisoner of war in Germany." *Cornhill Magazine* v.117, s.3, no.44 (May 1918): 511-26.

"Treatment of prisoners in Germany." *The Nation* v.105, (Sept. 27, 1917): 335-6.

U.S. Congress. Senate. War Claims Commission. *Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary*. 80th Cong., 2nd sess., February 17, 1948.

Vischer, Adolf L. *Barbed Wire Disease: A Psychological Study of the Prisoner of War*. London: Bale & Danielsson Press, 1919.

This is an interesting and significant book concerning prisoners of war and the psychological aspects of their captivity. As the authors note, the Great War provided a unique opportunity in its drawing together into confinement a great multitude of individuals from every class, rank, and race in Europe and the rest of the world. Its treatment of this wartime phenomenon is highly objective and offers a completely unique perspective, clearly distinct from all the other primary sources listed. It covers the usual areas of psychological inquiry, including: sexuality, disorders, group identity, memories, and irrational behavior. Its conclusion is that "barbed wire disease" is evil because it drains vital energy and can result in a permanent loss of individual happiness.

Images:

"Ruhleben Camp Magazin." from: Gerard, James W. *My Four Years in Germany*.

"In Feindeshand" from: Rachamimov, Alon. *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front*.

"Mid-Day Meal" from: Ketchum, John D. *Ruhleben: A Prison Camp Society*.

"Prisoner's Outfit" from; Dennett, Carl P. *Prisoners of the Great War: Authoritative Statement of Conditions in the Prison Camps of Germany*.

"Baseball and Volleyball" from; Hoffman, Conrad. *In the Prison Camps of Germany; a Narrative of "Y" Service among Prisoners of War*.

"Daily Sketch" from: Winchester, Barry. *Beyond the Tumult*. New York: Scribner Press, 1972.

"Opened Tunnel" from: Winchester, Barry. *Beyond the Tumult*. New York: Scribner Press, 1972.