

American Maritime Prisoners of War, 1812-1815

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The maritime prisoner of war situation in the War of 1812 was different by an order of magnitude from that in any other American war. Even in World War II, America's largest and longest-lasting maritime war, only a minute fraction of U.S. naval and merchant manpower fell into enemy hands — about 0.2%.¹ In the War of 1812 about 14% of American naval and private seamen were held as prisoners for at least part of the war — about 14,000 out of the roughly 100,000 men in the seafaring manpower pool.² Much of the basic data relating to the entire experience have fortunately survived. The letters and memoranda of the policy makers — British and American,

although scattered, are available. A large volume of detailed administrative information also survives. Detailed personal information on the prisoners themselves is available, probably the richest single source of information on American seafarers of the time, meticulously recorded on standardized forms by British civil servants.³ Similar data, although not as complete, were taken on the seafarers captured under the British flag by Americans and taken into the United States.⁴

Taken together, these data allow the consideration of three different categories of questions:

Questions on the POW system and process:

How the POW system worked, the flow of prisoners, the policies and how they were followed.

Questions on our merchant, letter of marque and privateer vessels:

Crew sizes and composition, age distributions of crews, where and when they were captured and by what enemy ships. For this last, no other source seems to exist for merchant vessel captures and only limited sources on privateers and letter of marque vessels.

Questions relating to the maritime work force and to the men themselves:

Growth rates of young sailors, career lengths, racial mix, age distributions of the work force, personal descriptions of individual seafarers including height, body build, wounds, scars and tattoos. Also, the relationships between these factors and rank/rating and ship type.

This paper is limited to the first area — the prisoner of war system and process. Full treatment of the second and third areas depends on the computer processing of the data from the *General Entry Books for American Prisoners of War*, housed in the Public Record Office, London, which is not expected to be completed until the end of 1986.

This paper will examine briefly three aspects of the prisoner of war system and process:

1. The policies pursued by the British and American governments with regard to prisoner of war issues.

2. The administrative framework used by the British to implement their POW policies, and the American reaction.
3. The impact of these policies and reactions on prisoners.

The principal focus of the paper will concern the policies followed by the British government toward American POW's, and because of interactions with these policies, the British policies with regard to British maritime prisoners held by the United States. British policy was more clear and consistent than American policy toward either American or British POW's.

On the British side the real architects of prisoner policy were the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty. A few decisions were referred to a higher level — to the Prince Regent's staff through Lord Bathurst, the Secretary of War. At a level below, day-to-day policy decisions were made by a separate organization under the Admiralty consisting of the Commissioners of the Transport Board and its administrative arm, the Transport Office. This organization also had the functions of managing troop transport and handling the Navy's medical problems.

While the Admiralty never formally articulated in one document an overall policy toward American POW's, it is clear from the orders given and statements made, and from the administrative pattern that emerged, that the following objectives were emphasized. These are in order of the priority that the British government seems to have placed on them:

1. To deny to the United States the use of as many American seafarers as possible for as long as possible.
2. To encourage the entry of as many American POW's as possible into British service, primarily the Royal Navy, but also the merchant service and the Army.⁵
3. To recover as many British maritime prisoners held in the United States as possible, as rapidly as possible, and to use these returned POW's as a direct manpower source for British fleet units operating in American waters.⁶
4. To restrict entry of British maritime POW's into American service.⁷
5. To minimize the costs of caring for POW's, consistent with presenting a public posture of humane treatment.⁸

American policy toward both American and British POW's seems to have been made by the Secretary of State, James Monroe, until mid-1813 when General John Mason was appointed as the Commissary General for Prisoners of War, under the Secretary of War.⁹ American policy seems to have had the following objectives:

1. To obtain the return of American prisoners held by the British in Canada and the West Indies by exchange for them of the limited number of British POW's in American custody.¹⁰
2. To obtain the return of American POW's held in England when British POW's were available for exchange in excess of those required for Canadian/West Indian exchanges.
3. To ameliorate the living conditions of American POW's, particularly those held in England, but within very tight cost restraints.¹¹
4. To encourage the entry of British maritime POW's into the U.S. Navy, privateer fleet and merchant service.

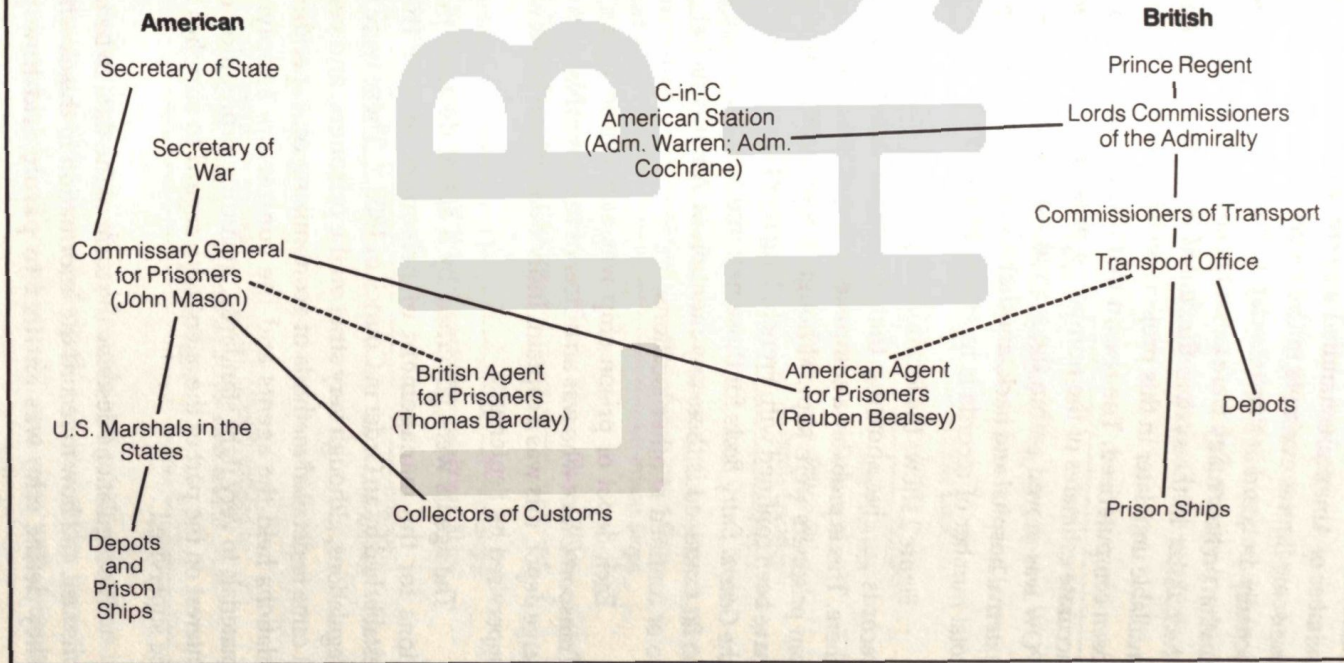
To describe American policy in such specific terms leaves the impression that it was more constant and highly developed than it probably was: During most of the war the British held the greater number of prisoners, and were therefore in a dominant position and American policy tended to be ad hoc and reactive.

Figure 1 diagrams in simple form the policy relationships that existed within the two governments and between them. The functions of the two men shown as the British and American agents for prisoners of war, both of them interesting personalities, will be discussed in the following section concerning administration.

The British had been dealing with French prisoners of war since 1793 and by 1812 had a thoroughly developed and tested system. This system included a wide-spread network of prison ships, prisons or "depots," some of them built specifically as POW detention centers (e.g., Dartmoor, Norman Cross and Perth¹²), plus a full-blown administrative structure with printed regulations, forms to be filled out and an experienced bureaucracy. To give some idea of the scope of the operation, the system is estimated to have processed about 122,000

Figure 1

Policy and Administrative Relationships



POW's between 1803 and 1814, most of them, of course, French.¹³ The number of Americans handled was somewhere around 10,000. There are some figures available in the records that show the exact number actually on board at a certain depot at a specific time. However, information on how many were actually captured and processed, and how the number in the system fluctuated over time is not expected to be available until later in this project, when the most of the records have been computerized. The reason that it is difficult to make reasonably accurate estimates of the number of prisoners is that each time that a POW was moved within the system, to another depot or even to an external hospital and back, another record on him was generated. The total number of records is in excess of 40,000.

Figure 2 shows the locations of prison ships and depots for which records survive showing that American prisoners were confined there. This is probably a complete listing of the locations where American prisoners were kept, although a few individual Americans may have been confined with French, Dutch or Danish POW's and listed in the *General Entry Books* for those nationalities. Nowhere in the records so far examined is there any mention of Americans being transferred to or confined at other locations.

Each depot or prison ship was supervised by an agent of the Transport Office who was an officer of the Royal Navy. At Dartmoor, a large depot, this was a captain. Individual prison ships were normally supervised by lieutenants.

The agents were governed by a set of detailed printed instructions for the management of prisoners of war that had been established by an Order in Council in 1808.¹⁴ These were very humane regulations, although very strict on the prisoners, and very rigid when it came to detailed methods of economizing on expenditures. The regulations held the agents and the contractors supplying food and materials to very tight standards, including prohibition of conflicts of interest on the part of the agent with regard to supplies for the depot he supervised.

The regulations describe the form of the data to be taken on each prisoner, and how to record the information in the *General Entry Books*. They define who was entitled to parole and how prisoners in

the depots and ships were to be mustered. They provide for barbers from among the prisoners and specify their rate of pay. They describe the ration allowance for prisoners, how the prisoner messes were to be organized, and provided for a prisoner committee to inspect the food delivered by the contractors. They provide for a daily market in which prisoners could buy extra food and clothing and sell the products of their manufacturing activities.

Figure 2
Detention Locations of American Prisoners of War, 1812-1815

England	
Ashburton	Parole Location
Chatham	Prison Ships
Dartmoor	Depot
Odiham	Parole Location
Plymouth	Prison Ships
Portsmouth	Prison Ships
Reading	Parole Location
Stapleton	Depot
North America	
Halifax	Depot & Prison Ships
Newfoundland	Prison Ships
Quebec	Prison Ships
Atlantic Islands	
Bermuda	Prison Ships
New Providence	unknown
West Indies	
Barbados	Prison Ships
Jamaica	Prison Ships
Mediterranean	
Gibraltar	unknown
Malta	unknown
Africa	
Cape of Good Hope	Prison Ships

At locations outside of England, officers entitled to parole were paroled ashore in the same area as the prison ships.

The evidence from both official records and prisoner journals indicates that the regulations were followed, and that under them the POW's were treated fairly, although strictly, and often with consider-

able forbearance — as is borne out in the descriptions in prisoner journals of the Fourth of July celebrations in 1813 and 1814. The toughest jobs in the whole system of POW administration fell to the two men who were for the U.S. and Britain the agents for prisoner affairs in the enemy's country. These were two very interesting, minor historical characters. They each had the task of trying to press their country's policy objectives for prisoners in the face of the almost diametrically opposed policies of the enemy host country. It was particularly difficult for Reuben G. Beasley, the American agent for prisoners in England. As noted earlier, the British had strong and definite policies on POW issues, and they held nearly all of the powerful cards. They were completely intransigent on most of the matters that the U.S. Government wanted Beasley to negotiate.

Reuben Beasley was a good deal more than simply our agent for prisoners. The recall of our Minister in 1811, and the departure of the *Chargé d'Affaires* in 1812 left Beasley, then the American Consul in London, to administer American affairs in England.

A large volume of Beasley's correspondence for this period survives in the National Archives and the Public Record Office. From this and from the contemporary journals of prisoners, he can be seen fairly clearly. What emerges is the outline of a man who was flawed and complex, human in the privacy of his letters, yet austere and unable to bend in personal contacts.

About one-half of Beasley's time was spent on prisoner affairs, judging from the volume of his correspondence in this area. The other half was divided between reporting to Secretary of State Monroe on political affairs and handling American commercial matters such as prize court cases. Beasley apparently presented a cold exterior in most personal relationships. He disliked meeting with the prisoners and in his exchanges of letters with the Transport Office, he apparently only twice requested to visit the prison ships and depots (in February and September, 1813). In the prisoner journals, his only two recorded visits to them were at Chatham and Dartmoor, in 1813. He met only with a small group of prisoner delegates, and then briefly. He apparently expressed distaste not only for the conditions at the prisons, but for the men themselves. His few letters to the prisoners were brief and cold.

The prisoners expected much from him in terms of improved clothing, more rapid exchange or release and a money allowance, partly because they had been led by the British staff at the prisons to believe that the amelioration of their misery depended on him as the American agent. When Beasley was unable to meet their expectations, they were at first frustrated and confused, but quickly began to hate him, and in spite of much improvement in their condition, continued to focus their resentment upon him even more than on their British jailors. The prisoners were particularly angered by his apparent neglect in not responding to their letters. However, after the war Beasley wrote Monroe that he had sent large numbers of letters to prisoners and to impressed Americans in the Royal Navy, but that most of them had been held up by the British and not delivered.¹⁶

There were few effective actions that Beasley could have taken to deal with the prisoner grievances, caught as he was between the intransigence of the British and the reluctance of the American government to spend money on prisoner support.

The British policy positions on three issues put the United States at a great disadvantage in the matter of prisoner exchanges, particularly for POW's held in England. First, the British insisted that American seafarers who happened to be present in British ports at the outbreak of the war either as merchant crews or as casual mariners "on the beach," were to be treated differently from other private American citizens and commercial travelers in England, and were not to be released without exchange. This was justified on the curious ground that inasmuch as British vessels had been excluded from United States ports in the pre-war period, that the United States had no counterpart concession to make in the release of British mariners.¹⁸

Second, the British announced that prisoner exchanges would only be recognized when made through the designated official POW agents and that exchanges made by commanders at sea, or more importantly, prisoners sent in for exchange by capturing ships, would not be credited toward future exchanges (even though the British recognized such exchanges with the French).¹⁹ The main and most effective American activities at sea were the cruising operations of the privateers, letter of marque vessels and a few Navy brigs and sloops

of war. These were small ships, usually far from a home port, to whom prisoners on board were a heavy encumbrance. Being unable to get credit for prisoners sent into English ports, and it being very inconvenient and expensive in food to carry them home for the bounty and for exchange, these vessels often simply released their prisoners, to the disadvantage of the U.S. prisoner account balance.²⁰

The third issue on which the United States was disadvantaged in prisoner exchanges was with regard to Americans transferred from the Royal Navy to POW status at their own request, to avoid having to fight against their own country. These were men who had been, in most cases, illegally impressed. The British decreed that these men were not eligible for exchange or release until the end of the war except in a very few cases. From the start of the war until about mid-1813, men in this status comprised the largest single category of American prisoners.²² Even in October 1814, after a great number of captures at sea had been made by the British, these "surrendered" men made up about 15% of the total of American POW's.²³ Thus, one large group of men was completely excluded from the possibility of exchange.

Further, both Britain and the United States treated the POW situation in the western hemisphere for all practical purposes as a separate system. Exchanges were made routinely of Americans held at British depots in America for British prisoners held in the United States. Only infrequently, usually when it was convenient to bring their to-be-released prisoners home to England, or when British prisoners taken by American ships were landed in France and exchanged to England from there, were exchanges of Americans made from the prison depots in England.²⁴ As a final difficulty on exchanges, the British in August, 1813, stopped all releases of American prisoners from depots in England until the account of British and American POW releases was brought into balance.²⁵

All this, of course, frustrated the hopes of American POW's in England. Notwithstanding these problems, and others to be discussed below, Beasley should probably have realized that if he had gone to the prisoners in the depots and on the prison ships, and explained to them why he was unable to help them, given them sympathy and listened patiently to their complaints, he would almost certainly have

had their goodwill. Instead, he put his efforts into continually and unsuccessfully pressing the British for more releases and exchanges of prisoners, and for more favorable terms of exchange, neglecting the day-to-day affairs of the prisoners.

The problems of clothing, rations and cash allowances for the American prisoners in England were made very difficult by a set of basic, possibly deliberate, misunderstandings between the two nations as to who was to pay for what for the prisoners being held by both sides.

This leads to the introduction of a second interesting character. On the first of December, 1812, the British government appointed Colonel Thomas Barclay as British agent in the United States for prisoners of war. Barclay, 59, was an American, born in New York. He had been an active loyalist during the Revolution, and went to Nova Scotia after the British defeat. He was sent to New York as British Consul General in 1799 and served as such until the start of the War of 1812. He lived on an estate that he owned in then-rural Harlem and by 1812, although a loyal British subject, with a son an officer in the Royal Navy, New York was his home in all respects, and he had many friends and financial interests there. He had hardly arrived in England in August, 1812 when he volunteered in November to go back to the United States as agent for prisoners. He also offered to provide His Majesty's Ministers, and the British naval and military officers in America with "early information."²⁶

He apparently had his own agenda, separate from British government objectives: After his appointment to the post of Agent for the Relief of British Prisoners of War in the United States, but before leaving England, he wrote to the Transport Office requesting the release of a particular American POW held in England. His request was refused. He obtained permission from both the Transport Office and the U.S. Government to locate himself at Harlem so that he could be in his own house and among friends, even though it was 200 miles from the U.S. officials in Washington with whom he dealt most closely, and over 100 miles from the nearest American depot for British prisoners of war.

Barclay received extremely detailed instructions from the Transport Office, and particularly was told what the terms of an overall

"cartel" (*i.e.*, agreement) with the United States on prisoner treatment and exchange should be.²⁷ A month later he was sent a copy of a provisional cartel agreement made between British and American officials at Halifax and told what the Transport Board liked and disliked about it.²⁸ He either didn't thoroughly read, or disregarded these instructions and proceeded to negotiate with General John Mason, the U.S. Commissary General for Prisoners of War, a cartel on prisoner affairs that was very favorable to the United States. Signed by Barclay and Mason at Washington on May 12, 1813, it agreed to valuations for exchange of the various military ranks that favored the U.S. and differed significantly from the valuations used by the British in exchanges with the French. It agreed to a slightly larger ration with more variety than the American POW's in England were receiving — larger than given to French prisoners, etc.²⁹ Barclay sent the cartel to the Transport Office for ratification.³⁰ They took a look at it and sent it to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty. It was apparently controversial enough to need higher consideration — perhaps Barclay had enough influence that they were reluctant to take him on directly — so they sent it to Lord Bathurst to get the Prince Regent's opinion. There was no reply for several months and then Barclay was sent a set of specific directions for changes in the cartel and flatly told to get them accepted by the United States.³¹

Thus until at least early 1814, perhaps for the whole war as I have seen no evidence that a cartel on prisoner treatment was ever officially agreed upon by the two governments, the British treated the American POW's as though their proposed cartel terms were in force. The United States acted as though the Mason-Barclay cartel agreement of May 12, 1813 was in effect, and Mason told Beasley to insist on its terms with respect to treatment of American POW's in England (there is no evidence that he did so, probably recognizing the fruitlessness of such an effort).³² Mason told Beasley in January, 1814 that as of the May 12, 1813 date of that cartel, he was responsible for providing clothing as needed to American prisoners in England.³³ The effect of all this on the American prisoners in England was that they were not furnished with clothing by the U.S. until May, 1814, while the British were very reluctant to continue to clothe them. The prisoners blamed all this on the stiff-necked, but unfortunate, Mr. Beasley.

At a later time, May 1814, Mason finally became convinced that the British had reduced the ration given to American POW's in the British prison depots and ships at Halifax, Barbados and Jamaica, below the level agreed to in the May 12, 1813 cartel, and regretfully ordered a similar reduction to the British prisoners in American depots. At that time he also told Barclay that he planned to send extra beef and pork via cartel vessels to American POW's in those three locations.³⁴ Apparently no attempt was made to supplement the ration of the American POW's in England, who had always received the lower ration specified in the British "Instructions for Agents." This was a reasonable course to follow, given the logistical effort that would have been involved, and the fact that the differences between the two rations, while significant, were not life-threatening.

In January 1814, Mason gave Beasley the authority to pay a small money allowance to the prisoners for soap, tobacco, sugar, etc., of 1 1/2 English pence per day, later raised to 2 1/2 pence.³⁵ This money, called by the prisoners "tobacco money," was issued every thirty-two days in the form of two one pound notes to each mess of six men, to be divided among them as they saw fit.³⁶ A little later U.S. Navy men began receiving half pay and some ex-Royal Navy men received long overdue pay and prize money from the Admiralty. At this time there was probably a flow of cash from these sources in the Dartmoor depot of roughly 2,500 pounds per month. With money in some quantity circulating among the prisoners, they were able to set themselves up in the market, some buying out departing French entrepreneurs at the time of release of the French in late spring, 1814. Extra food and clothing could be bought or bartered for prisoner manufactures, and life became more bearable.

In late 1813, the Admiralty had ordered that transports expected to be returning home empty from Quebec in the spring of 1814 were to bring American POW's from Halifax to England.³⁷ Then after the peace with France in April, 1814, when the French prisoners in England were released and sent home, a decision was made to concentrate the American POW's at one depot and Stapleton, near Bristol, was tentatively chosen. This was a good choice from the perspective of the prisoners: It was a healthy location, close to a major city (making for a

more diverse market), and was liked by the prisoners there. Some American prisoners sent from the Plymouth prison ships had been there since early 1813. However, before this decision could be more than partially implemented, it was changed and new orders given to concentrate all Americans at Dartmoor.³⁸

Dartmoor had been built in 1806 specifically as a POW depot. It was (and is) as grim a location as can be found in England. Its weather is cold, rainy and foggy, often when good weather prevails only a few miles away. Politics had been a large factor in the selection of this location for a prison depot: The Prince Regent, then the Prince of Wales, and some of his friends, owned land in the area and stood to profit from the activity at the prison.³⁹ In 1814 the same political reasons, this time aimed at maintaining the prosperity of the the Prince Regent's friends, probably led to the decision to concentrate the Americans at Dartmoor rather than Stapleton. It was a decision that was hard on the prisoners. They hated and dreaded Dartmoor and there were probably a number of unnecessary deaths from weather-related diseases as a result of the move. However, the conditions there aided British policy, as a significantly higher number of Americans from Dartmoor volunteered for the Royal Navy than from other depots, due partly to the bad conditions there.

Before it was all over, one other major policy and administrative disagreement between the two governments had a major adverse impact on the American prisoners in England.

H.M. sloop *Favourite*, which in January, 1815 brought the Treaty of Ghent to the United States to be ratified, also brought a British representative, Sir Anthony St. John Baker, authorized to negotiate on administrative matters related to the ending of the war. Baker and Mason discussed means and terms for repatriation of both American and British prisoners. As happened often before in U.S.-British discussions, there was not only disagreement but also misunderstanding.

The position of the United States was that each nation should charter and pay for shipping for the repatriation to the other country of the prisoners that it held. Put another way, the U.S. should ship home British prisoners in America and the British ship home the American

prisoners in England, with any imbalances in costs to be adjusted later. The British view, expressed by Baker, was that each nation should charter shipping to bring home its own men. Mason sent Beasley copies of his exchange of correspondence with Baker, and instructed him to approach the Transport Board with the American proposal, in the hope of overturning Baker's position.⁴⁰

These opposing views were self-serving and stemmed in large part from the circumstance that the United States held about 3,500 British prisoners at the war's end (many of them Canadian or West Indian), while the British held about 8,000 Americans, the majority of them in England. The result of this deadlock, and the implementation in England of the British position, was a delay in the obtaining of shipping to bring the Americans there home. Meanwhile, the American prisoners at Dartmoor became more and more restive. They had known of the peace treaty since Christmas week of 1814, and could not understand why the U.S. Government was not getting them released and brought home.

Actually, in mid-January, Beasley had asked the Transport Board to release as many Americans as he could get ships for, subject to exchange if the treaty was not ratified.⁴¹ The Transport Board agreed, but the Admiralty turned him down.⁴² Again in late January he asked for the release of the Americans in prison depots who had been sent in from British ships of war, release that previously had been promised to take place at the end of the war.⁴³ He received no reply. On March 15th, two days after H.M.S. *Favourite* returned to England with the ratified treaty, he asked the Transport Board that all American prisoners be released to him.⁴⁴ Two more weeks elapsed before he was notified by them that they were ready to release the prisoners when he provided ships for their transportation home.⁴⁵ He immediately chartered four vessels and started looking for more. This was difficult: He was unable to find other vessels and the four he had arranged for were slow in arriving at Plymouth. Part of the problem was that with the war over, shipowners were expecting a large demand for vessels in a postwar rush to re-establish trade, and most of them were looking for cargoes more profitable than a government charter to carry prisoners. The situation was further complicated by the disagreement over which

nation was to pay, and by the weak credit rating of the American government. In any event, Beasley was unable to find more ships and the delay in release of the prisoners continued.

Tensions were further increased by the arrival at Dartmoor of a notice to the prisoners from Beasley stating that he would be unable to pay them their two-and-one-half pence per day now that the war was over, as his authority for payment was limited to wartime and he would have to get additional instructions from home. As their pay was due about March 20th, anticipation was running high and this word from the already-hated Beasley infuriated them.

Finally, on the 6th of April, 1815, three-and-one-half months after the end of the war and three weeks after the ratified treaty had reached England, the pent-up frustrations of the prisoners at Dartmoor broke loose and a major confrontation between them and their captors took place. When it was over, seven Americans were dead and sixty more wounded, in the infamous "Dartmoor Massacre," when the garrison of British soldiers at the depot fired into the mass of prisoners crowded in the prison yard.

The British public was shocked, and the public shock was transmitted to the government. As a result, within two weeks the Admiralty told the Transport Board to get ships together to take the Americans home, and to settle the bills later as part of the overall settlement of the war.⁴⁷ It was quickly done and by early July most of the American prisoners were on their way. However, some were not liberated until early August. Some were not sent directly home but provided crews for American ships laid-up in Russia and Sweden. Also, the U.S. frigate *Congress*, sailing to Europe at about this time was to stop in England and fill out her crew from among the prisoners.⁴⁸

Even after their release, the prisoners' hatred of Beasley did not diminish. A group of the more articulate of the ex-POW's memorialized the government and talked to influential people. While factors other than the prisoners' views entered the decision, Beasley, who had been expecting to receive the plum of appointment as the post-war Consul in London, was offered Gibraltar instead. He turned it down and came home. His last letters to the State Department show

that he was unable to comprehend why all of this had happened to him.⁴⁹

This brief paper has covered only one facet of the captivity of the American seafarers in 1812-1815. A statistical study of the prisoners, both as POW's and as seafarers of the period, is expected to be ready for publication in late 1986. However, these studies do not incorporate most of the anecdotal material and many of the important incidents relating to the prisoners of 1812. A mass of this material, plus detailed chronological accounts of the life of the POW's can be found in the several journals and reminiscences written by the prisoners themselves or dictated to others. Appendix II gives a listing, discussion of authorship and brief critique of the journals and diaries that the present writer has been able to locate up to this time.

Notes

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¹ The number of maritime POW's in World War II was reported after the war as 6,232 (5,622 Navy and Marines, plus 610 Merchant Marine). The peak number of men in the Navy was 3,400,000, in the Merchant Marine about 250,000.

² Adam Seybert, *Statistical Annals of the United States* (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson and Son, 1818), pp. 308-309, gives the tonnage in trade as 1,302,925 tons and the tonnage in fishing as 69,294 tons. On page 315 he states that American vessels in trade averaged 6 men per 100 tons and those in fishing 8 men per 100 tons. The total Navy estimates for 1815 are given as 15,200 men. Sea-letter vessels comprised another 12,200 tons (page 314). Thus the total manpower to man all classes of vessels was about 100,000. An independent rough estimate can be made from the total number of men registered under the 1796 *Act for the Relief and Protection of American Seamen*. Between 1796 and 1812, about 107,000 men were registered. The total number of American prisoners of war was about 14,000 to 15,000, of which a few hundred were U.S. Army men.

³ *General Entry Books for American Prisoners of War*, Public Record Office, London. Admiralty 103 (Hereafter cited as ADM 103).

⁴ *Kalendars of Maritime Prisoners of War*, National Archives, RG 94. (Records relating to War of 1812 prisoners).

⁵ Beasley to Monroe, January 22, 1813, *Consular Letters from London, 1812-1816*, Records of the Department of State, National Archives, Microfilm T-168, Roll 10.

⁶ Transport Office to Barclay, December 1, 1812. Public Record Office, London. *Letterbook of the Transport Office*, Admiralty 98/292. (Hereafter cited as ADM 98).

⁷ Among the many references to this problem are: Transport Office to Barclay, January 5, 1813, ADM 98/292, and Barclay to Transport Office, June 5, 1813, in G.L. Rives, editor, *Selections from the Correspondence of Thomas Barclay, Former British Consul-General at New York* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1894), p. 333. (Hereafter cited as Rives, *Selections*).

⁸ Anonymous, *Instructions for Agents under the Commissioners for conducting His Majesty's Transport Service, for taking care of Sick and Wounded Seamen, and*

for the Care and Custody of Prisoners of War, respecting the Management of Prisoners of War at Home; as proposed by the Commissioners appointed for Revising the Civil Affairs of His Majesty's Navy, and Established by His Majesty's Order in Council, Dated the 14th of September 1808 (London: Printed by the Philanthropic Society, St. George's Field, 1809), *passim*. (Hereafter referred to as *Instructions for Agents*).

⁹ John Mason, a younger son of George Mason of Virginia, who was 46 years old in 1812. His son J.M. Mason became famous in the Mason-Sidell incident in 1861.

¹⁰ Mason to Beasley, January 25, 1814. National Archives, Office of the Commissary General of Prisoners: Letter Books, Volume 1, RG 47, Microfilm NNFL 68, Roll 198. (Hereafter referred to as OCGP).

¹¹ Mason to Barclay, January 6, 1814, OCGP Vol. 1.

¹² Ewart C. Freeston, *Prisoners-of-War Ship Models, 1775-1825* (Annapolis, 1973), p. 7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁴ *Instructions for Agents*.

¹⁵ Anonymous (Benjamin Waterhouse, M.D.), *A Journal of a Young Man of Massachusetts, Late a Surgeon on Board an American Privateer, etc.* (Boston, 1816; reprinted New York, 1911 as Extra No. 18 of the *Magazine of History*), pp. 135-40; Charles Andrews, *The Prisoners' Memoirs, or, Dartmoor Prison; Containing a Complete and Impartial History of the Entire Captivity of the Americans in England* (New York: Printed for the author, 1815), pp. 33-35, 97.

¹⁶ Beasley to Monroe, November 16, 1816, *Consular Letters*.

¹⁷ Beasley to Transport Office, December 15, 1812 and December 31, 1812, and Transport Office to Beasley, December 29, 1812, *Consular Letters*.

¹⁸ Transport Office to Beasley, November 24, 1812, ADM 98/291.

¹⁹ Beasley to Monroe, November 30, 1812, *Consular Letters*.

²⁰ Anonymous (Josiah Cobb), *A Green Hand's First Cruise, Roughed Out from the Log-book of Memory, of Twenty-Five Years Standing: Together with a Residence of Five Months in Dartmoor, by a Younger* (2 vols.; Baltimore, 1841), vol. 2, p. 199, describes an example of this.

²¹ Irving to Gallatin, June 3, 1814, *Consular Letters*.

²² Andrews, *Prisoner's Memoirs*, p. 17.

²³ Commissioners of Transport to J.W. Croker, Secretary of the Admiralty, November 2, 1814, Public Record Office, London. Admiralty In-Letters, ADM 1/3767. (Hereafter cited to as ADM 1).

²⁴ Transport Office to Beasley, April 23, 1813, *Consular Letters*; Beasley to Monroe, July 28, 1813, *Consular Letters*; Beasley to Monroe, August 6, 1813, *Consular Letters*.

²⁵ Beasley to Monroe, August 21, 1813, *Consular Letters*.

²⁶ Barclay to W. Hamilton, November 21, 1812, Rives, *Selections*, pp. 318-19.

²⁷ Transport Office to Barclay, December 1, 1812, ADM 98/292.

²⁸ Transport Office to Barclay, January 8, 1813, ADM 98/292.

²⁹ The standard ration served by the British to POW's in England is described in the *Instructions for Agents*, Appendix No. 13. The ration agreed to in the Mason-Barclay cartel of May 12, 1813 is given in Barclay's letter to the Transport Office dated May 20, 1813, and in Mason's letter to Barclay of April 2, 1814. Translated into modern nutritional equivalents, after assumptions for the loss of water in drying meat, the two rations compare with each other and with the ration served to sailors in the Royal Navy as follows:

May 12 cartel rations: 2520 calories per day; 23% protein, 20% fat, 57% carbohydrate, by weight.

Standard POW ration: 2410 calories per day; 23% protein, 13% fat, 64% carbohydrate.

R.N. ration in 1812: 3900 calories per day; 24% protein, 16% fat, 60% carbohydrate, without including spirits or beer.

The National Academy of Sciences Food and Nutrition Board in 1968 recommended that an American male 69" tall, 147-154 lb., 18-35 years old (roughly the average size and age of 1812 sailors) should have 2,800 calories per day, including 60-65 grams of protein. The proportions of protein, fat and carbohydrate in both POW rations are roughly the same as those recommended as dietary goals for the United States in 1977 by the Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs. It should also be noted that American POW's in England had access to additional food (for cash) in the prisoner market.

See *Appendix I* to this paper for a more detailed comparison of the various rations.

³⁰ Barclay to Transport Office, May 20, 1813, ADM 98/292.

³¹ Transport Office to Barclay, August 18, 1813, and November 6, 1813, ADM 98/292.

³² Mason to Beasley, January 7, 1814, OCGP Vol. I. Beasley informed Monroe in August 1813 that the Mason-Barclay cartel would not be ratified by the British. Beasley to Monroe, August 21, 1813, *Consular Letters*.

³³ Mason to Beasley, January 6, 1814, OCGP Vol. I.

³⁴ Mason to Barclay, May 2, 1814, OCGP Vol. II.

³⁵ Mason to Beasley, January 7, 1814, OCGP Vol. I.

³⁶ Cobb, *Green Hand's Cruise*, pp. 172, 186.

³⁷ Transport Office to Barclay, December 3, 1813, ADM 98/292.

³⁸ Basil Thomson, *The Story of Dartmoor Prison* (London, 1907), p. 122.

³⁹ Justin Atholl, *Prison on the Moor* (London, 1953), p. 15.

⁴⁰ Mason to Beasley, March 6, 1815, OCGP Vol. I.

⁴¹ Transport Board to Admiralty, January 19, 1815, ADM 98/123.

⁴² Beasley to Monroe, February 15, 1815, *Consular Letters*.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Transport Board to Admiralty, March 15, 1815, ADM 98/123.

⁴⁵ Transport Board to Admiralty, March 31, 1815, ADM 98/123.

⁴⁶ Cobb, *Green Hand's Cruise*, pp. 187-191.

⁴⁷ Transport Office to Beasley, April 19, 1815, ADM 98/291.

⁴⁸ Mason to Beasley, April 24 and 25, 1815, OCGP Vol. II.

⁴⁹ Beasley to Monroe, November 16, 1816, *Consular Letters*.

Appendix I

Food Content and Nutritional Value of Rations Provided to American Prisoners of War, 1812-1815

(Figures are weight of ration item in pounds per week per person, unless noted.)

Ration Item	I POW Ration provided in England ¹	II POW Ration agreed to in May 12, 1813 Cartel ²	III POW Ration provided at Halifax ³	IV POW Ration provided at Bermuda ⁴	V Ration provided to American POWs on British Cartel Vessels ⁵	VI Ration provided to Ex-POWs on American Cartel Vessels ⁶	VII Ration provided to British Ex- POWs on British Cartel Vessels ⁷	VIII Royal Navy Fleet Ration ⁸	IX US Navy Fleet Ration ⁹	X Modern Recom- mended Diet ¹⁰
Beef	2.5	7.0	7.0	3.5	7.0	7.0	7.0	3.5	3.5	
Salt		or		or		or		0.5	0.5	
Pork		5.25		3.5		7.0	7.0	1.76	3.0	
Cheese								0.66	0.38	
Salt fish	2.0									
Bread	10.5	7.0	7.0	10.5	7.0	7.0	7.0		6.13	
Biscuit								6.13		
Potatoes		7.0		7.0	3.5	0.5 (Sun.)				
Turnips	2.5	I								
Onions	1.25 oz.	or								
Barley	5 oz.	I								
Pease		1.75 pt.	7 gills		7 gills	3 pints (Mon-Sat)		1.76 pt.	1 pint	
Oatmeal		or						2.64 pt.		
Rice		2.625							1.0	
Flour									1.0	
Vinegar		2.625					1 gal.		0.25 qt.	
Molasses									0.13	
Butter								0.44		
Beer								6.16 gal.		
Spirits							1.75 pt. rum		1.75 qt.	
Calories per day	2410	2520		2460				3900	2950	2800
Grams protein	126	121	(See note 11)	99	(See note 11)	(See note 11)	(See note 11)	140	144	65
% Protein (by weight)	23	23		17				24	23	12
% Fat (by weight)	13	20		12				16	19	30
% Carbohydrate (by weight)	64	57		71				60	58	58

Notes: 1. From *Instructions for Agents*, Appendix 13. 2. From Letter Mason to Barclay, April 2, 1814, OCGP, Vol. 2. 3. From Waterhouse, p. 24. 4. From Palmer, p. 19. 5. From Palmer, p. 202. 6. From Letter, Beasley to Monroe, August 6, 1813, *Consular Letters*. 7. From ADM 98/292. 8. From C. Lloyd and J.L.S. Coulter, *Medicine and the Navy* (Edinburgh, 1961), Vol. III, p. 81; Reduced to reflect Purser's share. Without beer or spirits allowance. 9. From E.K. Eckert, *The Navy Department in the War of 1812* (Gainsville, Fla., 1973), p. 46; without spirits allowance. 10. Calories and grams of protein allowance from "SCOPE" Manual on Nutrition, (Upjohn Co., 1970); Protein, fat and carbohydrate percentages are on "percent of total calories basis," and are from "Dietary Goals for the United States," Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, U.S. Senate, 1977. 11. Nutritional values in these columns are roughly the same as in column 2.

Appendix II

A Descriptive List of Prisoner of War Journals

1. Charles Andrews, *The Prisoners' Memoirs, or, Dartmoor Prison, containing a complete and impartial history of the entire captivity of the Americans in England, from the commencement of the late war between the United States and Great Britain, until all prisoners were released by the Treaty of Ghent* (New York, printed for the author, 1815), 283 pages.

Charles Andrews was the second mate of the merchant vessel *Virginia Planter*. Born in Newport, R.I., he was 36 years old at the time of the capture of his ship off Nantes, France, by H.M.S. *Pyramus*. Although he asserts in his journal that he was one of the first prisoners captured, the *General Entry Book* of the prison ship *Hector* shows him to have been captured on March 18, 1813. Along with other POW's from the *Hector*, he was sent to Dartmoor on July 1, 1813 (he says April 3, 1813 in his journal). He states in his journal, and the *Dartmoor General Entry Book* agrees, that he was discharged from Dartmoor on April 20, 1815.

Andrews' journal has a stronger anti-British tone than any of the other journals located so far. It also has more day-to-day detail than any of the other journals. It agrees with the other journals and with the official records on most important details, except for dates in the early part of the journal. Perhaps he started it after he had been in Dartmoor for some time, and was relying on memory for the earlier dates. It is apparently the only journal that was kept with the purpose of providing a log of the prisoner experience, as contrasted with a personal diary. He gives a list of American deaths at Dartmoor. There is a copy in the Library of Congress.

2. Anonymous (Benjamin Waterhouse, M.D.), *A Journal of a Young Man of Massachusetts, Late a Surgeon on Board an American Privateer* (Boston: Rowe and Hooper, 1816; reprinted, New York: William Abbatt, 1911, as Extra Number 18 of the *Magazine of History*). There are 272 pages in the 1911 edition.

Sabin credits the authorship of JYMM to Dr. Waterhouse, who was 59 in 1813, and who is not recorded as serving at sea during the war. Accepting him as the author leaves the question of who underwent the experiences described and told them to Dr. Waterhouse after the war.

From the details given in the journal, the ship that the "young man" was captured in, on May 24, 1813 off Martha's Vineyard, was the privateer *Enterprise*. The crew was taken to Halifax. The "young man" was apparently not the surgeon of the vessel, although the journal identifies him as such: The sur-

geon was one Amos Babcock, who was released without exchange in less than a month. The "young man" could have been the surgeon's mate. Although no such rating is listed among the *Enterprize* crew, seamen often served in that capacity.

Following out the details of subsequent transfers, to England, first to Portsmouth, then the Chatham prison ships and finally Dartmoor, only one member of the *Enterprize* crew in the official records fits the narrative in the journal. He was Henry Torey, a 21 year old seaman from Massachusetts.

Assuming that the "young man" was Henry Torey, how did he make the connection with Dr. Waterhouse after the war? There is no direct evidence but a possible answer is this: Also listed as a prisoner at Chatham and later at Dartmoor during the same period as Torey, was a Moses Waterhouse, 23, of Massachusetts. The two men arrived at Chatham aboard the same transport, and their prisoner numbers were close together, indicating that they stood near each other in the line when being processed at Chatham and may have been acquainted. Perhaps Moses Waterhouse was a relative of Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse, and the two young men went to see him after their return home and jointly narrated their adventures — the Doctor choosing to use Torey's context for the part of the journal giving the adventures up to the arrival at Chatham.

JYMM is particularly useful for the description of life aboard the prison ships at Chatham. The description of events and details is much more vivid and usually more complete than in Andrews' journal, but of course it is all second hand, apparently having been narrated to Dr. Waterhouse who wrote it down, but who was not present at the events. However, the descriptions are rich in detail, and the journal checks out with other contemporary information, both in journals and in official records. There is a copy of the 1911 edition in the Library of Congress.

3. E.G. Valpey, editor, *Journal of Joseph Valpey, Jr., of Salem, November 1813-April 1815, with other papers relating to his experience in Dartmoor Prison* (Michigan Society of Colonial Wars, 1922), 71 pages.

Joseph Valpey, 22, was captured in the privateer *Herald* on August 15, 1814. He was received in Dartmoor on October 28, 1814, and was released on April 20, 1815, having bought another man's turn to be released, a common practise. He therefore spent about six months in Dartmoor.

His descriptions of prison life convey a sense of the interminableness and boredom that must have been a major feature of the existence of the POW's. He describes the contacts between shipmates and Salem town-mates which served to fill the time. He was also a prolific poet, and the poems give

additional insights into the life of the POW's and their attitudes. The first ten pages give a vivid description of the privateering life. There is a copy in the Library of Congress.

4. Benjamin Franklin Palmer, *The Diary of Benjamin F. Palmer, Privateer-man*, (Printed for the Acorn Club by the Tuttle, Morehouse and Taylor Press, 1914), 274 pages.

Benjamin Palmer, 21, was captured in the *Rolla* privateer by H.M.S. *Loire* on December 10, 1813. He was taken to Bermuda and put in a prison ship until August 1814, then transferred to England, arriving at Dartmoor on October 5, 1814. He was released on April 27, 1815, having bought the name of another man.

This journal is especially valuable for its description of the daily life of the American prisoners at Bermuda, and is the best of two surviving accounts of this. For the seven months that Palmer spent in Dartmoor, his diary is consistent both with official records and the other journals.

Palmer also describes in detail the trip home in a hired ship after the war, with the taking over of the ship by the ex-POW's in order to divert her into New York rather than the planned destination of Norfolk. There is a copy in the Library of Congress.

5. Anonymous (Josiah Cobb), *A Green Hand's First Cruise, roughed out from the log book of memory, of twenty-five years standing: Together with a residence of five months in Dartmoor. By a Younker.* (Baltimore: Cushing and Brother, 1841), Volume I, 247 pages; Volume II, 329 pages.

Neither the author's name nor that of the ship he served in are given in the text. However, the author gives a prisoner number that he says was his at Dartmoor — 6632. Also, the Library of Congress card catalogue gives the author as Josiah Cobb. A check of the information in the Dartmoor General Entry Book shows Josiah Cobb as a 19 year old seaman captured in the *Prince de Neufchatel* privateer on December 28, 1814 and received in Dartmoor on January 30, 1815. His number was 6234, and all details of his capture in the journal check with the official records. Prisoner number 6632 does not fit these details at all.

Both the title page and the preface state that this is a reminiscence, set down from memory twenty-five years after the events took place. Thus in historical value, it ranks behind the contemporaneously written journals. However, in descriptive details given, it is far more extensive than any of the other journals located so far. It reads like a Victorian novel, which to a certain extent it is, but gives much small detail that is not available from any other

source. It is the basic source apparently used by most popular authors in describing life and events at Dartmoor. Cobb could have used the Andrews journal or JYMM to jog his memory, then filled in the wealth of detail from his own recollection.

He gives a detailed description of the voyage home after the war in a hired vessel, including the ex-prisoners seizing the ship and changing the destination from Charleston, South Carolina, to Boston. There is a copy in the Library of Congress.

6. Nathaniel Pierce, "Dartmoor Prison, December 28th, 1814, Plymouth near Devonshire, Nathaniel Pierce, His Book, dated at Dartmoor this 28th day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fourteen 14. In No. 7 Prison S.E. end Middle Deck, England. Nathaniel Pierce of Newburyport, Mass." Typescript copy of a manuscript in the Widener Library, Harvard University. The double-spaced typescript has 48 pages.

In the Dartmoor *General Entry Book* his name is spelled "Pirss," however phonetic spellings are not uncommon in these records. The details in the official records jibe closely with the journal. He was captured from the *Halifax Packet*, a prize to the *Harpy* privateer, by H.M.S. *Bulwark*. He was received in Dartmoor on December 27, 1814 and released on July 3, 1815 — one of the later prisoners to be received and one of the last to be released.

I have found his journal to be the most useful of all from the point of view of a late twentieth century researcher trying to see these early nineteenth century men and events through their own eyes. The journal has lots of detail, unusual insights, and to me at least, it has a distinct "sailor-like" flavor. He ends the journal on July 2nd, 1815, "for want of paper," and says, "tomorrow I leave this cursed depot." The *General Entry Book* confirms that he did.

7. Francis G. Selman, "Extracts from the Journal of a Marblehead Privateersman Confined on Board British Prison Ships, 1813, 1814, 1815," contained in *The Marblehead Manual*, compiled by Samuel Roads, Jr., (Marblehead, Mass.: Statesman Publishing Co., 1883), pp. 28-96.

Francis G. Selman was the First Lieutenant of the privateer *Growler*, which was captured on July 7, 1813 near Newfoundland by H.M.S. *Electra*. The crew was taken first to St. Johns, Newfoundland, and put in a prison ship there. After about a month, he was taken to England, first to a prison ship at Portsmouth, then another at Chatham, and finally to Dartmoor, where he arrived October 8, 1814. He provides information on the deaths of prisoners of his acquaintance, and the journal includes a list of men who died in Dartmoor hospital and at Stapleton. He was released on April 27, 1815. There is a copy in the library of the Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.

8. Nathaniel Hawthorne, editor, "Papers of an Old Dartmoor Prisoner," published in the *U.S. Democratic Review*, New York, in seven parts, January to September, 1846.

This is the journal of Benjamin Brown, which was raised into literature by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Brown was a pharmacist in Salem who went to sea on the *Frolic* privateer as a Captain's Clerk. Captured in the West Indies by H.M.S. *Heron*, the *Frolic* crew was taken to Barbados, and after a brief stay, to England. Brown arrived at Dartmoor on September 30, 1814 and was released on May 1, 1815. He went home to Salem, where he remained for the rest of a long life. He wrote down the narrative of his experiences shortly after the war. He was a neighbor of Nathaniel Hawthorne, who edited the narrative and arranged for its publication.

Brown's narrative closely matches the official records, and is consistent with the other journals. It is good reading and in addition contains some details not found in the other journals. There is a copy in the Alderman Library at the University of Virginia.

9. James Fenimore Cooper, *Ned Myers; or, A Life Before the Mast* (New York: Stringer and Townsend, New Edition, 1852; first published 1843), 232 pages.

Ned Myers told the story of his experiences to Cooper in the early 1840's, and as with Ben Brown and Hawthorne, Cooper turned the yarn into literature. Myers escaped from the sinking in a squall on Lake Ontario of the U.S.S. *Scourge*. Transferred to the U.S.S. *Julia*, he was captured, still on Lake Ontario, by H.M.S. *Wolfe* and sent to the Melville Island POW depot at Halifax. He was sent to Bermuda and placed aboard a prison ship, then later returned to the depot at Halifax. He was released on March 8, 1815 and sent to Salem, Mass. Ned Myers' story has special interest because the U.S.S. *Scourge*, from which he escaped as it sank, survives underwater in excellent condition off Hamilton, Ontario, and together with the U.S.S. *Hamilton*, which was lost at the same time, is the focus of a current marine archaeological project. There is a copy in the Alderman Library at the University of Virginia.

10. George Little, *Life on the Ocean, or Twenty Years at Sea* (Baltimore: Armstrong and Berry, 1843).

Little was a prizemaster on a prize taken by the *Paul Jones* privateer when he was captured in January 1813. Taken to Plymouth, he spent about a month in a prison ship and was then sent to the depot at Stapleton. When Stapleton was closing, he was sent to Dartmoor.

This is one of the best journals for description of the prisoners and their appearance and habits. It is also excellent for its description of the privateering life, particularly its seamy side and the vicious actions of some of the people involved. There is a copy in the Maryland Room, University of Maryland Library.

11. Two letters: G. Bayly, to Lavinia Bayly, August 24, 1813, and John Baker, to his father, August 4, 1814. Manuscript letters, in MS 1846, Maryland State Historical Society.

Neither of these men can be traced in the official records because no information on their capture is given in either letter and their names are too common to be of help in identifying them. Bayly's letter is fifteen pages long in a double-spaced typescript copy, and gives a very useful description of POW life in a prison ship in Jamaica. Baker is writing home from Dartmoor asking for money to be sent to enable him to buy provisions and clothing. The letter is two pages of manuscript.
