

1  
Mark M. Wheeler  
Co. D 1<sup>st</sup> regt. W. Cav.  
after 25 years since the  
war I thought I would write  
what I past through while  
a prisoner of war I was taken  
prisoner June 29. 1864 at  
Stoney Creek Station Va  
it was while on Wilsons raid  
we left camp near Petersburg  
June 27. 1864 to destroy the  
South side railroad the  
enimy tried to stop us but we  
repused them and destroyed the  
railroad from powder to Blacks  
and whites in the afternoon  
the 23. we had a hard fight  
near Mottomay station my  
regt was at the front all

2

after noon our reg<sup>t</sup> held  
the railroad. the rebel made  
several desperate charges to drive  
us from it. our reg<sup>t</sup> made a  
charge on a rebel battery result-  
ed in driving the enemy from  
their guns but before we  
could spiked or dragged away  
the guns the rebels made a  
carnite charge upon our flank  
compelling us to fall back  
to the railroad which was  
held all night the next morning  
we started for the Danville  
road which we struck at  
Meherrin Station the remainder  
of this day and the next day  
was spent in destroying the  
track from the Junction  
to the little Roanoke the  
bridge across the river was  
destroyed all of the mills along  
the rant was destroyed same

of which contained a large  
 amount of grain and cotton &  
 tobacco we found <sup>the people</sup> abundantly  
 supplied with the necessaries of  
 life hams bacon corn wheat  
 and flour kindred of bushels  
 of corn we would find at a  
 single place to feed the horses  
 of the whole command the  
 people are well supplied before  
 daybreak Sunday June 26 we  
 started ~~on~~ and return we  
 marched south through Christian  
 ville then took an easterly  
 course passing through Greenburg  
 Lewisville Lawrenceville Smoky &  
 ordinary about noon of the 28  
 we crossed the Nottaway and  
 was nearing Stoney Creek station  
 when we found a strong rebel  
 force in our front we were all  
 hoping to reach our lines by  
 morning we had done the rebels

more harm than any other <sup>4</sup>rolling  
party and thus far had met with  
little loss besides the property we  
had destroyed we were bringing  
away over a thousand negroes  
men women and children the  
rebels had a powerful force in  
our front our regt. was ordered  
to the front the men dism-  
ounted and commenced building  
breastworks very soon the rebels  
charged our skirmish line and  
my regt. was ordered up to ~~support~~  
it. the firing was very heavy  
during the entire evening and at  
times during the night just  
before day light our brigade  
fell back a piece three regts  
of which ours was one were  
to keep back the enemy  
while the rest of the command  
passed to the left our men  
were dismounted building

a line of breastworks in the  
 woods the horses were in ~~a~~  
 field a few rods to the rear  
 Just after day light the  
 rebels came on to the attack  
 upon our lines steadily and  
 coolly their ranks moved up  
 to our front as they approach-  
 ed the breastworks our men  
 took deliberate aim and poured  
 an effectual fire into their ranks  
 had the rebels force all been in  
 front very different would  
 have been the result with a  
 force larger than our own they  
 came in upon either flank  
 our men were forced to fall back  
 simultaneously with the attack  
 upon the men the rebels came  
 upon the horses and those  
 holding them only saved them  
 by hurrying them ~~to~~ by  
 the road to the left the

6  
rebels come down upon this  
road thus cutting off our men  
from all support and leaving them  
no line of retreat here it was that  
so many were captured I can  
not describe the feeling  
upon me found that we  
had got to surrender to  
the rebels they came on  
to us like a lot of mild  
Indians they wanted to butcher  
us they robbed us of all we  
had money hats and clothings  
and was not satisfied with  
that I had seen a great  
many rebels before they  
were like <sup>mild</sup> ~~beasts~~ than any  
things else when they had  
got through with us we  
had no match left they  
marched us back over the  
field where we fought  
the night before the ground

was covered with wounded  
 and killed it look<sup>d</sup> as though  
 they had lost more than  
 double that we did they  
 marched us back to stony  
 creek station we had not  
 had any thing to eat since  
 the night before they did  
 not offer to give us any  
 thing to eat in the after  
 noon they put us aboard  
 off a train and started us  
 toward the south we could  
 not find whair they were  
 goin to take us the first  
 night we stayed in mellen  
 north Carolina we did not  
<sup>get</sup> any thing to eat till the  
 next morning we had just  
 began to realize what we  
 had got to come to. we were  
 a strong lot of men there  
 was over two hundred men

Salisbury

8

Taken how little we realized  
what we had got to pass through  
after they given us some corn  
bread they marched us to  
depot and put us aboard of  
the train and that night we  
arrived at Salisbury prison  
I will now give you a glimpse  
of Salisbury prison as we entered  
in through the gate what a  
scene met our eyes ~~men~~<sup>men</sup> with hardly  
any clothing and what they  
had on was all in rags. we  
could hardly believe they  
could be so reduced. ~~so~~  
low they began to inquire  
about the war they had not  
had any news only what the  
rebels had given them they  
told our men that the United  
States had deserted them and  
had left them to their fate  
and they could not be blamed



9  
if they would desert and fight  
against a country that would not  
exchange them knowing when  
exchange was refused that it meant  
starvation and death as the  
Confederacy had nothing to  
feed them with and told our  
men if they <sup>would</sup> enlist in their  
army they would clothe them  
comfortably and give them plenty  
to eat many brave men of  
many nations have done deeds  
far whiteth their names have  
been handed down in history  
for us to admire but none have  
ever excelled the union soldier  
whose honor and loyalty was put  
to the test of a rebel military  
prison in the south ~~from~~ <sup>for</sup>  
the cause unto death whiteth  
was preferable to liberty  
and dishonor as a deserter but  
few men ever deserted <sup>the</sup> union.

army the prisoners were so  
 sorely afflicted and at the time  
 of my departure they too like  
 the ~~burning~~ <sup>burning</sup> victims  
~~of the fire~~ were shorn of their  
 vitality and strength and stood  
 bare and unrightly tanned the  
 surface of the ground that was  
 covered with green grass was also  
 completely changed shelters put  
 up in all kinds of conceivable  
 shape I suppose to suit the  
 material they had at hand and  
 besides these the surface was  
 pierced with innumerable holes  
 there was also all kinds of  
 old ragged tents put up in  
 irregular order and presenting  
 any thing but a military  
 aspect the reader can now imagine  
 for himself what kind of  
 a picture Salisbury prison  
 would present - only not

very attractive imagine this  
 picture if you can and then  
 people it with sick ragged and  
 starving men who could be seen  
 some of them slowly tottering  
 and dragging across the pen  
 only waiting to die their only  
 hope of liberty and then  
 ask your self if the  
 Government can ever repay the  
 survivors or ever do them justice  
~~at all~~ <sup>can</sup> there be a price even  
 approaching recompense for  
 service and suffering such  
 as the union prisoners of war  
 suffered and endured in the  
 rebels prison pens of the south  
 the party that I was with had  
 no blankets or tents we had  
 to lay on the ground it  
 was almost impossible to eat  
 the rations that we received  
 and not half enough of that

me was their two nights and <sup>12</sup>  
then we was taken out and put  
aboard the train we was put  
into box cars as many as they  
could get in they put into each  
car a barrel of matter drawn  
out of their matter tanks  
poor slimy stuff it <sup>made</sup> most  
of us sick it was so warm  
in the cars that we could  
hardly stand it it brought  
the Diarrhoea to most all  
of the men we road all  
day and night and the next  
day we aived at Columbia  
on the fourth of July we  
were taken out of the cars  
and marched to the prison  
they then give us something  
to eat I shal always remember  
one circumstance there was  
a union man come in to  
prison to see us he told us  
to write some letters and

he would see that they would  
be sent through the lines how  
<sup>glad</sup> we was to have the privilege  
to write <sup>to</sup> our loved ones at home  
that was the only letters that  
my wife received from me after  
I was taken prisoner although  
rate several little did those  
at home realize what we had  
to pass through I do not think  
there is so alive to day that  
was taken prisoner when I was  
the next morning we were all  
taken out and put aboard  
the train and then for the  
first time we found out  
our destination the rebs told  
us that we were going to Anders-  
sonwill we had <sup>feel</sup> off the place  
but did not <sup>think</sup> it could be any  
worse than other prison on  
the six of July we arrived at  
Anderssonwill they took us out

of the

cars and marched us to the  
 prison when we got to the prison  
 Capt. Merty or the old clutch  
 Capt. as we us to call him  
 came to see us and ordered us  
 all searched the guard went  
 through our packets anyone  
 that had any thing that  
 was worth any thing they  
 took it from us he told  
 us that if we refuse to  
 be searched he would cut  
 our heads off with his sabber  
 I had in my pocket a picture  
 pictuar of my wife and baby  
 I refuse to give it up finally  
 they let me keep it it gave  
 me great plasure to have it  
 to look at after they had  
 searched us all they wanted  
 to they took our names Co  
 and regt. and then marched  
 us through the gait

into prison as soon as we  
 got into the prison the  
 prisoners collected around us  
 to get the news and to see  
 if they had any one that  
 belong to their regt. almost  
 the first question that they  
 ask was if our government  
 was not going to exchange  
 soon we told them we did  
 not know but we hope  
 so, the first thought that  
 entered our minds was  
 can this be in hell it  
 seems as though their  
 could not be a worse place  
 ever in the future punish-  
 ment as we look upon the  
 suffering men with hardly  
 any thing to cover their  
 nakedness ~~but~~<sup>hair</sup> footed with  
 out hats or caps and but  
 few that had any shelter

16  
for months I found two  
of my Co. Thair that had  
been prisoners a year how they  
had ever lived so long I do  
not know they both died  
in a short time after I  
got thair the prisoners told  
us to look out for the  
dead line if <sup>we</sup> reached our  
hands over the dead line  
the rebels would shoot us  
that we had got to be  
very careful the rebels  
told us we would have  
to find our own place  
to camp thair diet seems  
a though thair was any  
place for us every place  
was a night side we was all  
counted of in squads of  
80. and a sergent to each  
80 men he had to draw  
~~of~~ the rations for his 80



our ration at that time was  
corn bread made from corn  
and cob meal and small pieces  
of meat there was not anymore  
thin enough for one meal a  
day it did not seem as  
men could live on so small  
a ration, but it was all they  
could get as we looked  
over the camp or bull  
pen as we use to call it  
there was inclosed about  
24 acres in side of the  
stockade the dead line  
was about 20 feet from  
the stockade so that it  
took up about  $\frac{1}{2}$  or 6 acres  
of land there was a swamp  
through the center of the  
camp or near the center  
that took up 4 acres  
more this was the sink  
place where the men went

a more filthy place I never  
saw the stench was so  
bad that we could hardly  
pas by it all along the  
side of it men were obligd  
to camp I do not know  
how men ever lived thair  
a week men lying around on  
the ground with out tents  
or blankets covered with filth  
alwey with lice the ground  
was covered with lice and  
in the night thair was  
Millions of mosketo to  
draw the last drop of blood  
it was a continy warfair  
to keep those pest away  
men had come so reduce  
that they could not keep  
them from devouring them  
I have seen men that was  
so bitten by those mosketo  
that thair hands and feet

and face swollen they could  
hardly see. That the first  
<sup>day</sup> was their I found a Quack  
of mine he was one of the  
first to enter into that  
prison pen and invited me  
to camp with him he was  
their when they enlarged  
the stockade and had move-  
d on to the new ground  
and took his place beside  
a large stump which I  
shall speak about farther  
along. When we arrived at  
Andersonville they were having  
the trial of the raiders their  
raiders were a set of black  
legs that had been let out  
of prison to go into the  
army and was soon taken  
prisoner their plan of  
operation was to find out  
if any of the new comers  
had any money and then

watch where they sayed nights  
 and then creep up to them  
 and stab them and rob  
 them they had painted it  
 for along time till the  
 prisoners formed a large police  
 force and station men  
 around the camp after  
 a while they captured  
 six of the leaders and  
 had them tried for murder  
 er the January was taken  
 from men that had just  
 come in they had a Judge  
 and lawyers on both sides  
 they had trial of several  
 days after the evidence  
 was all in the lawyers began  
 their plea in had good  
 lawyers their they <sup>made</sup> as strong  
 a plea as they do hear in  
 our country parts after the  
 lawyers had got through

The Judge charged the  
Jury and they retired  
to give their verdict in a  
short time they brought  
in a verdict of murder  
in the first degree while  
they was having their trial  
Capt. Westly sent in word  
if they found them guilty  
he would take them and  
put them under guard  
and keep them till our  
men could build a scaffold  
to hang them and soon as  
they received their verdict  
they sent word to the Capt.  
and he sent in a strong  
guard and took them  
out side and then sent  
in a load of lumber to  
build the scaffold with  
our men went to work and soon  
had it ready they was to

hung on the 12 at noon the <sup>22</sup>  
murders thought our men did  
not claim to hang them the scaffold  
was arrange to hang the six  
at once on the 12 at noon the  
rebels brought them in and  
when they saw the galos  
they saw that their life  
was short our police had  
a strong guard around the  
scaffold the rebels marched  
them into the ring and  
turned them over to our  
men the leader was a fearful  
man he broke through the  
police and tried to escape  
but a number of police started  
for him and took him back  
and marched them upon  
the scaffold after a short  
pray they placed the rope  
around their necks and drew  
the black down <sup>exp</sup> over their  
faces each man had his hands

tied behind him and then the  
 guard stepped back and in a  
 moment the drop fell one  
 of the mens rope broke  
 where I stood it was nearly  
 twenty rods from the  
 scafoald but I could hear  
 the man beggin for his  
 life but they marched him  
 back to the scafoald and  
 put the rope around his  
 neck and pushed him up  
 it was the first time I  
 ever saw a man hangd and  
 I hope it will be the last  
 time that night they was  
 taken out and bared and  
 we did not have any more  
 trouble we had a small  
 policee force to keep order  
 if they caught any one  
 stealing they were punisht  
 same one we ar another

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the most cruel of any thing  
was to buck and gag them  
and leave them two or three  
hours at times they suffered  
terribly they could not  
help their selves any but  
had to lay in the hot sun  
with hundreds of flies on  
their face and then I have  
seen them turned on their  
passes and then give them  
so many lashes with the  
cat and nine tail the  
cat and nine tail was  
made of nine raw hides  
lashes tied on a handle  
about two feet long every  
blow they struck the  
blood spurt from the  
men it seem micked but  
their had to be order if  
it had not been <sup>that</sup> any order  
the meek one would not had



any thing to eat ~~or more~~ their  
 was ~~not~~ trouble if every one  
 minded his own business  
 at the time I sawd their their  
<sup>was</sup> great ~~for~~ suffering a money  
<sup>The</sup> reason for want of matter the  
 matter we had was what  
 we get from the brook  
 that run through the stack  
 and the rebel camp was  
 above our camp and we had  
 to take all of the filth  
 from their camp the  
 matter that run through  
 our camp run through  
 the mass there <sup>was</sup> not  
 hardly any fall to clean  
 of the filth their was  
 a thick ~~run~~ run on the  
 top of the matter all of  
 the time the only place  
 we could get any matter that  
 we could climb ~~was~~ was near

<sup>26</sup>  
The dead line I know that the  
matter had more to do with  
the sickness in camp than  
any thing else most all of  
the men had the chronic  
diarrhoea and dysentery I have  
seen men with their legs  
and feet so swollen that  
they would burst open  
and the flies would get  
into the sores and soon the  
maggots would be seen in  
the sores I have seen as  
much ~~than~~<sup>as</sup> a pint taken  
out of their legs at times  
what a relief it was for  
those when they died  
and was taken out and  
placed in the dead ditch  
as the camp began to be more  
crowded every day with fresh  
arrival of prisoners every day  
brought from 1,00 to 500  
hundred into our prison

by the last of July I had <sup>27</sup>  
had 33 Thousand men in  
the prison we was so crowded  
that was not hardly room to

lay down in going back  
and forth through the camp  
we had to step over men lying  
on the ground and every morning  
passing through the camp I  
would see men laying around  
on the ground dead and some  
dying what a sight met an  
eyes I have seen men laying  
on the ground alive with  
maggots crawling out and in  
their mouths and ears and  
eyes the smurf near where  
they camped the ground was  
covered with a living mass  
of maggots you could see the  
whole 4 acres in nothing  
with maggots and those that  
camped near had to fight

them to keep them back  
 what a sight to see men  
 so reduce that they could  
 not keep them back we  
 would average from 100  
 to 150 a day of the dead  
 that use to be carried to  
 the gait to be taken out  
 and buried the rebels had  
 a gang of negroes to work all  
 of the time carrying out and  
 carrying they would drive in  
 a dead cart and then <sup>the</sup> negroes  
 would take their bay their  
 legs and arms and sming them  
 into the cart as many as they  
 could get on and then go out  
 to the bearing grounds and  
 take them out and return and  
 get another load those that  
 had friends would fire on  
 to their close their name  
 and right. I do not think

That  
 their one in a hundred could  
 find where their friends  
 were buried as I saw some  
 of our men carried out I did  
 know how soon my turn would  
 come I had the chronic diarrhoea  
 so bad that I grew ~~much~~  
 very fast but my courage  
 was good I use to tell the  
 rebels that they would never  
 have the privilege of carrying  
 me out our men use to try to  
 escape through tunnels they  
 would work night after night  
 digging tunnels their plan was  
 to start a tunnel <sup>near the dead line</sup> under some  
 tent and at first would  
 spread the dirt around  
 on the ground as much  
 as they could to avoid their  
 dig a hole big enough to  
 pack the dirt so as to  
 leave a place large enough

to crawl through sometimes 30  
it would take three or four  
weeks to get through when they  
came to the Stockade they  
had to go deep enough to get  
under the Stockade the Stock  
ade was set in to the ground  
six feet and run up about  
20 feet high after they had  
got under the Stockade they  
would dig gradually up toward  
the surface as soon as they  
got so that <sup>they</sup> could punch  
a spike up through the  
ground they would then  
return and wait for a dark  
night and they would let  
their friends know and  
would start and try to  
get away but few ever  
got away every morning the  
rebels would take a gory of  
blood barrels and go around  
the Stockade we could always

<sup>tell</sup> when any one had escaped the 31  
hounds would make the most  
unearthly noise and before night  
they would have the person back  
once in a while one or two would  
escape as soon as they had got  
back to prison they would  
go to work on another tunnel  
in some other part of the  
ground some of the prisoners  
was put in the stocks and  
some had to wear a ball and  
chain faster to their  
ankle the stocks was made  
of plank sited into upright  
standards that had holes cut  
through the plank for  
your hands and feet and  
head they would raise  
the plank and put your  
feet and hands & head  
through the plank and  
then they put them together  
and leave you exposed

To the sun all day it was  
 terrible the flies and mos-  
 quito <sup>would</sup> almost eat you up  
 the men could not stare

\* now more some would die  
 others would live through  
 it but I do not <sup>know</sup> how they  
 did when the rebels took  
 them out of the stocks their  
 hands & feet & faces would be  
 swollen so that they could  
 not see out of their eyes  
 others would be back<sup>2</sup> back  
 nearly torn to pieces by  
 the blood hounds the  
 only way that they could  
<sup>escape</sup> out of their way was to  
 climb trees and those  
 that could not get into  
 trees the blood hounds would  
 tear some to pieces before  
 the rebels could get up



when any prisoner got out <sup>33</sup>  
the rebels would not give us  
any thing to eat till they  
had found the tunnel and  
had it filled up many times  
we would have to go two  
days with any thing to  
eat and we did not get  
any more at first we got  
corn bread after a while  
they would give us corn  
cob meal one pint a day  
when we could <sup>get</sup> any wood  
to cook it but many had  
to eat <sup>it</sup> raw the rebels ~~would~~  
would give us one four foot  
stick of wood a day for  
80 men to be divided into  
80 pieces it made a small  
piece of wood to make a  
fire with we use to dig  
the stumps and roots out of  
the ground the land that  
we was on <sup>was</sup> new land the

rebels had cut the timber  
 off to build the stockade  
 the timber was pitch pine  
 and it made a good fire  
 every root was dug out of  
 the ground four feet deep  
 the stump that my uncle  
 and I camped beside give us  
 wood while I was in prison  
 about once a week we would  
 get a mess of beans that  
 we would not give to our  
 sheep they was a small  
 black bean and every bean  
 had from one to three bugs  
 eat into them their whole  
 bigness we use to cook them  
 bags and all and glad to  
 get some fresh meat for  
 it was the only fresh meat  
 we had while in prison  
 in a half a pint of beans  
 their would be us much

as two table spoons full  
 of bugs I have had may  
 ask me how they tasted  
 I told them that they  
 tasted a little peppery  
 but not very bad. They  
 want to know why I did  
 take them out I told them  
 that we could not face  
 to lose all of the best  
 of the bear, when we  
 catch them when the matter  
<sup>was</sup> began to get hot the bugs  
<sup>would</sup> kick out of the bears  
 but they could not get away  
 for we had them safe  
 they had to assore for  
 pepper and salt & meat  
 so you see that we some  
 times had extays some  
 times we could not get them  
 quite clear or some of them  
 had been dead to long

They would not cook tender <sup>36</sup>  
when we ~~eat~~ eat them they  
would crack in our teeth  
like raisin seeds I have  
seen men ravin crazily  
for want of sometime to  
eat they would crawl  
down to the swamp  
when they could not walk  
and pick up beans that  
had not been digested  
and eat them how many  
times I have wished that  
Jeff Davis & Capt. Mextey  
and others leaders were  
obliged to suffer the same  
as our men did there was  
a Irish man in their  
said that he would like  
to feed Jeff Davis three  
month an half rasion &  
then see how him look  
and then feed him an  
quarter <sup>ration</sup> three months

more and then see how  
him look & then three  
months more an nothing  
and see how him look  
the last three months was  
about the way our men  
look. The first <sup>of</sup> Aug. it  
was hot and dry the froak  
that run through the stock  
ade had dried up so that  
but a small stream run  
through the camp it began  
to look as if we would not  
have water long the water  
in our barnyards & in  
it had settle into holes  
was as pure as the water  
that we got in prison  
the suffering was so great  
that it did not seem as  
though men could live any  
time with out better water  
one night I herd singing

I to the place and there I  
saw a large gathering of prisoners  
They were holding a pray meeting  
I stood and listened to them for  
a long time their pray was  
that god would relieve their  
suffering and these meetings  
continued every night for some  
time I was not a christian  
at that time and I did not  
see how god could relieve  
the suffering but still I wish-  
ed their pray would be answer-  
ed with such pleading at the  
Throne of grace I never  
have <sup>heard</sup> before or since matter  
seemed to be their united  
pleading that god would send  
better matter to relieve the  
great suffering in camp about  
the 7 & 8 of aug. we had one  
of the heaviest Thunder  
storms that I ever saw  
it seem to come down in